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*Gli argomenti di queste lettere riguardano la descrizione di città e centri della Puglia (Brindisi, Giovenazzo, Monopoli, Barletta ecc.), la visita al monastero di Montevergine, il soggiorno napoletano e le gite a Pozzuoli, Posillipo, Campi Flegrei ecc. con annotazioni sul carattere dei napoletani, la descrizione delle antichità di Pompei ed infine il soggiorno romano e fiorentino con osservazioni sul Carnevale e sulle bellezze artistiche delle due città. Raro.*





# LETTERS

ON

## Italy;

ILLUSTRATED BY ENGRAVINGS.

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BY

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HONORARY MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF  
FINE ARTS AT PARIS.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

M. CASTELLAN is well known to the Foreign Literary World by his "*Lettres sur la Morée, L'Hellespont, at Constantinople;*" to which his *Letters on Italy* form a sequel. The *Visit to Italy*, of which he gives an account in the latter work, was made at the conclusion of the last century.

These Letters are valuable, as they tend to show this delightful country in a new point of view. M. CASTELLAN traversed Italy with the eye and enthusiasm of an Artist, though not without bestowing due attention on the remains of antiquity and the interesting recollections with which the seat of Roman greatness abounds. Equally attached to the beauties both of Nature and Art, M. CASTELLAN has given a lively and spirited sketch of a country which is favoured beyond all others in its delightful scenery, and in its rich treasury of Works of Art.



# TRAVELS IN ITALY,

&c. &c.

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## LETTER I.

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*Passage from Corfu to Italy—Arrival at Otranto—Earthquakes in the kingdom of Naples—Temple of Minerva—Appearance of Otranto—Passage to Brindisi—Visit to a Villa—The Convents of Brindisi—State of the Town—Dresses of the Italians.*

THE passage from Corfu to Italy does not in general occupy more than four-and-twenty hours: we were eight hours ere we passed the eastern side of the island, visiting, much against our will, every little port. During the night the mountains of Epirus presented a singular and imposing appearance: a thick red-coloured smoke rolled round their sides, or surrounded their summits with a fiery girdle. The wind added strength to the flames and forced them into long sinuous streams, not unlike torrents of lava, which seemed to blaze along the foot of the mountains, displaying their shape by the reflexion of their blaze. In short, the scene had all the appearance of a vast volcanic eruption; it was, however, nothing more than the burning of the innumerable spicy shrubs which covered the face of the country; an operation which the husbandmen find very useful in supplying fresh shoots of herbage, the succeeding spring, for their flocks.

At length, after tacking frequently, and having approached very near the shores of Epirus, we were borne back on the Isle of Fano, or the Scogli, which are indeed nothing but shelves of rocks. A few half-starved wretches exist here, who were unable to offer us provisions of any kind, not even water. Our impatience increased when we beheld the Venetian galleys, which swept through the channel with great rapidity, in every part of it, by means of their powerful tiers of oars, and which could have conveyed us instantaneously to our destination, if

the captains could have been prevailed on to lend us their assistance. A real misfortune was now added to our perplexity; calculating upon the usual length of passage, the provisions, which we had not spared, were nearly all consumed, and it was found necessary to limit us to a small ration. To add to our difficulties the excessive heat of the weather had corrupted our store of water. This disagreeable situation was becoming very alarming, when most fortunately a favourable breeze sprung up which bore us through the channel, and our captain, like a new Achates, called out "Italy, Italy!" and pointed out in the horizon an elevated strip of land. "Italy!" this word echoed through our hearts, which beat as joyfully as those of the companions of Æneas, and with a kind of rapture which we could not help feeling—a sentiment which every artist would have felt in our situation, and which did not surprise even our Greek sailors.

The coast of the ancient Apulia is exactly such as it is described by Virgil, and it forms a striking opposition to the deep declivities of the other shore. We now caught sight of the turrets of Otranto, and with every sail stretched we ran to anchor, rejoicing that we had arrived at the end of our difficulties, when a cannon-shot, hissing above our heads, pierced one of our sails, and we perceived, on the other side of the roads, a galley which made a signal for us to come to, and send on board her. It would not have been wise to have refused such a pressing invitation, and we did not wait to be asked a second time. Our sailors let go the sail in terror, and the captain immediately entered the boat; my friend accompanied him, and they rowed away while we put the ship about to await the result of this ill-auguring circumstance. When they arrived on board the galley, the captain, who was incensed at our disregard of his signals, threatened to sink our little vessel. He had imagined it belonged to some fishermen who would gladly offer him the first-fruits of their labour, but when he recognised a French officer who could complain of this violent proceeding, he endeavoured to treat the matter as a joke, boasting of his skill in firing so as to attract our attention, and procure himself the pleasure of our acquaintance. My companion told him that his pleasantry was rather rough, and that we should have preferred a little less address and more circumspection. The return of our embassy procured us the liberty of coming to anchor, which we did at the entrance of the roads near a mass of rocks, on the summit of which a small church is built.

Otranto has a very picturesque appearance: the view on the right is terminated by the extreme point of the rocks; in front lies a flat shore, which serves as a port for the un-



shipping of goods, and a steep causeway, terminated by two columns, and leading to the gate of the city. This shore is used as a promenade by the inhabitants. In the back-ground a few elevated spots of ground are covered with verdure.

The city extends on the left, and forms at the extremity a rounded promontory. It is built on a platform of rocks which fortify the shore, and afford a protection against the force of the sea and the attacks of artillery. The citadel, which was built by Alphonso of Arragon, and the plan of which is difficult to be comprehended, is commanded by a square tower which supports a belfry on the top, to alarm all the coast when the Turks endeavour to land. The remembrance of the horrors suffered during the siege in 1480 from the Mussulmans who mastered the city and threatened the surrounding country, still keeps the inhabitants in a state of watchful alarm.

Earthquakes are frequent in the kingdom of Naples. In 1450 one was felt which spread terror amongst all the inhabitants, and for many months they lived in fear of being buried under the ruins of their habitations. The province of Otranto suffered extremely; and the Terra di lavoro, Abruzzo, and Puglia were covered with ruins. Some castles were swallowed up without leaving the slightest trace behind them; and 30,000 persons are computed to have perished. At length, in order to appease the divine anger, king Alphonso commanded a procession to Brindisi, to the ancient church of Santa Maria di Leuca, situated on the promontory of Otranto. On this spot formerly stood a temple, which is said to have been that of Minerva, seen by Æneas on his first arrival in Italy.

We may here observe, that the temples of Minerva have resisted the attacks of time better than those of any other divinity—probably because this goddess, who was the patroness of wisdom, found more favour in the eyes of the Christians than any other heathen deity. Whatever be the reason there certainly remain many of her temples which have been converted into churches. We may mention that at Athens, which would still have remained entire but for an unfortunate accident; at Rome the temple of Minerva Medica, the church of Santa Maria della Minerva, &c.

We may also remark, that with very little alteration the statues of this goddess might have been rendered subservient to the Christian worship, and that many of the ancient Madonnas resemble in attitude and drapery the images of Minerva; for it was nearly the fifteenth century before the Virgin was represented holding the infant Jesus.

The houses of Otranto rise above the line of ruins which surround the crumbling walls, and crown them in an agreeable

and picturesque manner. In the simplicity of their form, in their flat roofs, in the terraces by which they are terminated, and in the small windows so distant from one another, we recognized the style which painters attribute to Italian buildings, and which differ exceedingly from that of the edifices of other countries.

Diversity of climate ought always to govern the mode of building. Here the absence of snow renders useless the pinnacles which disfigure our houses. The necessity of breathing the fresh air in the night, and the custom of sometimes sleeping in the open air, are the causes of their terraces and verandas; while their windows, being few and small, admit less heat into the interior of their habitations. The Italians, however, have nothing further to do than to pursue the taste of their ancestors; and we may see they still inherit their genius by the character of grandeur, simplicity, and beauty, which distinguishes all their buildings,—from the simplest cottage to palaces and temples.

In consequence of the necessity of performing quarantine we were not allowed time to examine the interior of Otranto; we were therefore not able to judge of its riches and its population, which is said to amount to 3000 souls. The quay was covered with merchandizes, and the number of ships which frequented the port made us conclude that commerce was in a flourishing state: the city also appeared busy and active. In the evening we perceived on the beach some equipages more rich than elegant, and some gentlemen on horseback well mounted. The pretty peasant girls wore bodices of taffeta and skirts of white muslin, and their heads were covered with straw hats or silk handkerchiefs. Until the night was far advanced the air resounded with strains of music, and with melodious voices mingling with the sound of all kinds of instruments.

Our passage from Otranto to Brindisi, where we were to finish the period of our quarantine, was very short. Our hearts seemed to expand with the thought that we should shortly be no longer exposed to the caprice of the winds and waves, and that after a period of captivity, too long for our wishes, we should be permitted to traverse a land which we almost considered as our own country.

The city of Brindisi is built upon a point of land, the angle of which juts into the port. A lofty column of ancient white marble rises on this spot, surmounted with a rich composite capital; and near it lie the pedestal and base of a similar column which they told us had been transported to Lecca, the chief town of the province so called, where it adorns the principal



square, and supports the statue of the tutelary saint. The other edifices of Brindisi are constructed of brick and stone; churches covered with roofs of flat tiles, or with depressed domes, with their square and arcaded belfrys supported by little columns, gave us a good idea of the Lombard architecture which preceded the revived style, and which displayed a character very superior to that of the crowd of buildings of later ages where the beauty of the edifice is lost in the excess of useless ornament, and in the contortion of every architectural part. Here and there palm trees rise, intermingled with a few cypress and other trees, which form a fine contrast with the buildings, and render their outline very picturesque.

At length the period of our quarantine expired. Impatient to enjoy the pleasure of once more walking at liberty, and to satisfy our curiosity, we traversed the city in every direction. After having been so long shut up in our little vessel without the least exercise, the height of every thing we saw, and the length of the streets appeared prodigious to us; every new object drew from us an exclamation of joy or of surprise, and the view of the country above all produced the most delicious sensations.

This taste was particularly gratified by a visit to a villa, which possessed great attractions for the artist and the antiquarian. Although the buildings were sinking into ruin, and the gardens were abandoned to the dominion of Nature, who seemed to have asserted over them all her rights, we were no less surprised than enchanted by recognising in this situation all the characteristic marks of an ancient villa. These it has preserved by reason of its never having ceased for ages together to belong to contented families, who, averse to change, thought it was sufficient if they enjoyed the pleasures of their ancestors, and who had not therefore been tempted to make any change in the order and ancient disposition of the place.

It is not built on a very regular plan, and the builder has confined himself to the advantages which the inequality of the ground afforded, which is supported in some places by terraces, under which there are vaulted halls, ornamented with stuccoes and paintings, and which served the ancient proprietors, as they may still serve the present, as a refuge during the intense heat.

The part which appeared best preserved was a large gallery (*ambulacrum*), shadowed by a very ancient vine, if one may judge from the size of the branches, which twines itself around the marble columns. Most of the capitals bear marks of antiquity; their form is very simple: it consists of a square basket, on the planes of which are carved in relief the symbols

of agriculture, or animals, such as sheep, goats, &c. A few of these capitals, which exhibit marks of repair, clearly of modern date, enable us to judge more accurately of the antiquity of the others.

Less curious to examine the city of Brindisi than to distinguish amidst modern structures, or those of the middle age, traces of the ancient Brundisium, we should have preferred calling up the manes of their ancestors to conversing with the present inhabitants. However, we were obliged to be content with the living, and we prepared to pay some visits. Our first was to the Governor of Brindisi; he could not receive us, as he was in the access of a fever. Our next was to the Archbishop, but he was too ill, and had been carried into the country. This account gave us much concern, as he was represented as a very respectable character, a man of learning, and a lover of the arts. He possesses a rich cabinet of antiquities.

The convents only were left, to give us an idea of the society of Brindisi: let not this sentence astonish the reader, for his surprise must soon cease. The cloister and society! these certainly in former times were incompatible expressions, but they are now no longer so—we are told that the Jesuits gave to their order the title of a society, and that in fact they caused a revolution in the monasteries, which seem from this period to have almost become the asylum of tolerance, politeness, and proper enjoyment. The monks, without losing any of the dignity of their situation, have adopted the tone and manners of polished society. This change is very perceptible at Brindisi, where, without any exaggeration, nearly half the people are inhabitants of convents. The reason of this is very simple: in a confined situation, possessing neither the advantages of industry nor of commerce, the citizens are exposed for three-quarters of the year to obstinate maladies, which make them prefer the comfort and assistance which association affords to the solitude of a private family: the poverty of many individuals is another powerful cause. In the convents are found cheerful company, games of all kinds, and music; so that, in fact, their apartments are become saloons. We have visited several convents of females: the ladies crowded into the room, and shewed much anxiety to see us; they overwhelmed us with questions as frivolous as our answers, but some delightful music came to our assistance; voices such as we then heard are only found in cloisters; the hymns sung in perfect harmony, accompanied by the organ and other musical instruments, produced a great effect—it seemed almost like a concert of angels in the middle regions of the sky: Abundance

of refreshments were offered us, and we departed with a very agreeable impression of these religious establishments.

We have mentioned the poverty of the town; the interior of it is consequently gloomy and silent; the least article of luxury cannot be obtained here; in fact, sickness has depopulated whole streets. There are some large houses which are called palaces, but they are uninhabited, and the long grass waves in their court-yards; the proprietors have fled to seek elsewhere a purer air, and a less monotonous life; on the walks a few women may be seen, and now and then some monks: we remarked three heavy-built coaches drawn by mules; they contained monks.

The port, which should present an animated picture of merchandize and commercial bustle, is even more dull than the town; it only displays a stranded galley and a few boats. The works ordered by Government languish, affording employment to some galley-slaves, who are guarded by almost an equal number of soldiers, for the most part sickly and diseased: the usual food of both is large white onions, and the inhabitants do not fare much better. Troops of beggars assail the church, and the doors of the convents, where soup is distributed: misery is here so great, and disease so extended, that one hospital was not sufficient, and they were obliged to erect another. The inhabitants of the country seem to enjoy an easier life, at least if one may judge by the costume of the women, which is very neat.

In general, I believe there is no country where dress is more elegant and rich than in the kingdom of Naples—it varies from canton to canton, and from village to village, with the strangest singularity. The costume of the inhabitants of Brindisi appeared very remarkable, especially of the men, who wear our fashions of fifty years since; our fashions, indeed, make the tour of Europe, but they arrive very late at its extremity. Paris, which is the centre of activity, necessarily possesses less influence in proportion to distance; fashions there are like the flowers which bloom during the day, and fade at night; carried into the provinces they live a little longer, and when, at last they reach foreign countries, they take root and flourish there a long time.



## LETTER II.

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*Departure from Brindisi—San Vito della Macchia—Fine landscape—Ottara—Monopoli—Ruins of Egnatia—Polignano—Singular Caverns—Mola—Bari—Fine tract of Country—Giovinazzo—Towns on the Coast—Ancient roads—Barletta—Description of the field of Cannæ—the Tavogliere of La Paglia—Fine mountain view—Bovino—Beautiful scenery—Ariano—Plain of Avellino—Monte Virgine—Cemetery of the White Benedictines.*

WE set off from Brindisi, and it was too late ere we reached San Vito della Macchia, to flatter ourselves with the hope of seeing this little town to advantage, which we were told would well repay the trouble. It is also called San Vito degli Schiavi, from a tradition that it was built at the commencement of the 15th century by slaves, who erected there a magnificent church and a splendid palace. We had no opportunity of judging of these, but we were sure of one thing, that the founders had extended very little of their munificence to their inns, for that where we lodged, and which was the best or rather the only one, was very miserable, and yet the population amounts to 4000 souls.

The *Vetturino* did not fail to awaken us an hour before our departure, that we might not make him wait, as we had a day's journey of 35 miles before us.

The sun, as it arose, discovered a very interesting country. The chain of the Apennines was on our left, and the blue summit of these mountains had a very picturesque effect. On our right the sea burned with the rays of the sun, which seemed to pour down from the top of an ancient fortress called Santa Sabina, one of the strongest on the coast. Here and there some trees were scattered, and some shepherds' huts, whilst the flocks were seen hastening to the pasture grounds. We could also perceive the little town of Ostuni, situated on a hill, and surrounded with woods, which supply the inhabitants with the pleasures of the chase. The appearance of the country, the fine weather, the open air, and the exercise,

seemed to strengthen us, and give an appetite. We arrived in this disposition at Ottara, where we were to dine.

Our vehicle stopped in the yard of the most wretched and dilapidated inn which can be imagined. The Vetturino having told us, that, as we had still a considerable distance to go, we could only stop a very little time, immediately left us, and bestowed all his attention on his horses; we had then to run from house to house to collect some miserable provisions for our still more miserable dinner. It was nevertheless very late when we arrived at Monopoli, and we had much difficulty in procuring them to open the gates.

Before resting an entire day in this town, we could not resist the desire of visiting the ruins of the ancient Egnatia, to which, it is said, this town owes its origin. The walk was very agreeable at this season of the year. We directed our steps towards the Abbey of San Stephano, formerly a commandery of the Knights Hospitallers, through odorous groves of oranges and lemons which surrounded it. At a little distance, and on the borders of the sea, there stands a small fortress, protected by artillery, and garrisoned by some soldiers, who are always ready in case of alarm, on the signal of the *guardia-marina*, to march towards that part of the coast which is attacked: soon afterwards we arrived at the scite of Egnatia.

The spectacle of a town in ruins and depopulated, is one which ought to excite the attention of the historian, the man of observation, and the artist; the one find traditions, the other sensations, and the third picturesque effect; and all of them deplore the disasters of a powerful city, whose history has perished from the memory of man.

The traces of the ancient towers and walls of the city are visible, but we could not find the temple of which preceding travellers have spoken; nor did we penetrate into the place which is called *il Parco*, and which has a subterraneous vaulted corridor lighted with glass. The other edifices, as the halls of baths, tombs, aqueducts, &c. present nothing but a heap of ruins, round which parasitic plants have climbed. Egnatia did not answer our expectations, notwithstanding all our desire to see it.

From Monopoli to Polignano we followed the sea-coast, where, at stated distances, guards are placed. The country is more fertile than picturesque, and is planted with olives and vines.

Polignano is a pretty little town, built upon rocks, which are hollowed into caverns, into which the sea-water flows, and which may be traversed in boats; they descend into them from the town by stairs cut in the rock. The population is

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reckoned at 4000 souls, and includes many respectable families; the country around produces good wine and fruits, and the port excellent fish.

Mola, where we dined, and which is called Mola di Bari, to distinguish it from Mola di Gaëta, is situated on the road from Naples to Capua. It possesses a citadel, said to have been founded by an Athenian colony, on a point which projects into the sea. The inhabitants, who are reckoned at 8000, have preserved nothing of the taste and politeness of their ancestors; the streets are narrow and dark; some soap and leather manufactories render them filthy and unhealthy: there is also a custom-house and a salt warehouse. After having travelled during the day on a very flat but rocky and fatiguing road, we arrived at Bari, one of the most interesting towns on this coast.

Every little town which we have passed through on our route, boasts, perhaps with reason, of the importance which its antiquity confers on it, or of the historical facts of which it has been the theatre. The inhabitants never fail to relate every revolution, vicissitude, and disaster, which can be remembered, and to name the emperors, kings, and bishops, and, in short, every important personage who has given them cause to grieve or rejoice. The vicissitudes which Bari has experienced, have left it very few relics of antiquity; all that we saw was an ancient mile-stone marked the 28th.

*Oct. 25.*---On leaving Bari we were much delighted by the beauty of the country, so well cultivated and sowed, as it were, at small distances with little towns, all situated on the borders of the sea, with convenient ports for small craft, and surrounded with rural farms, cottages, and villas, which gave an idea of the riches and industry of the inhabitants. We distinguished, in the gardens, plantations of orange and lemon trees, arbours of vines, hedges of laurels, and parterres bordered with cut box, containing all the flowers of the season. We also travelled through woods of large olive-trees, which stretched nearly to the borders of the sea, and through fields covered the cotton plant. At this period of the year many Albanians pass over into Italy to assist the labourers; and, as they preserve their costume, we had much pleasure in recognising in Italy the habits and manners of Greece. The citizens and peasants whom we met on our route were well clothed and mounted; they saluted us in a friendly manner, and possessed an air of happiness, from which we inferred they were well governed: the municipal administration is, in fact, well conducted. Each of these little towns possesses respectable public establishments, academies for youth, and hospitals for the poor, the infirm, and the destitute.



Giovenazzo, the first of these towns after Bari, is old, and built, it is said, on the ruins of Natiolo or Netio; but the period of its construction is uncertain: it is surrounded by walls, and its cathedral is in a good style of architecture. The population is said to amount to 5,200. A few miles further on lies Molfetta, a modern town, whose inhabitants, in number 3000, are said to be very industrious. Then follows Besceglia, built on a rock which is washed by the sea.

It is remarkable, that in this part of the country the houses of the peasants are all built on the same model; at first, on the authority of former travellers, we imagined them to be ancient tombs, which they resemble in form: they are built in isolated situations, and rise here and there in the midst of the plains and pasture grounds, for here the *Tavoliere* commences. (See *Plate I.*)

Trani, like the other towns situated on the coast, is built of a yellowish stone, which does not grow darker by exposure to the atmosphere, and which gives the edifices a light pleasant appearance. This town contains some curious monuments, and is inhabited by many of the nobility. The population is reckoned at 14,000 souls; but it possesses less commerce than Barletta, where we arrived very late with an intention of staying two days.

In the time of the Romans, Magna Græcia was intersected by an infinite number of roads; and although the *Via Appia* was the most celebrated, there were many others equally good, and constructed with the same care---such as the *Domitiana*, the *Herculeana*, that of *Campania* or the *Consularis*, the *Nolana*, the *Latina*, the *Egnatiana*, and the *Brusiana*, which led from *Reggio* to *Calabria*. These roads had all their different branches; at present there is only one great road, which traverses the kingdom, and that is in bad repair.

The streets of Barletta are straight and well paved; the walls, which are a mile in circuit, are solidly constructed, and the citadel is strong: they shew to strangers the *Orfanosio*, or retreat for orphans, two schools of polite learning, and some churches. Here resides the *Reggio Portolano*, who, under the command of the royal chamber of Naples, inspects the provisions which are collected in the *Capitanate* and the territory of *Bari*. Here also the *Royal Council of Commerce* is held, and this town is the residence of the *Inspector of the Salt Manufactories*, and of the *Grand Prior of Malta*, who holds the assemblies at which the *Knights* bring proof of their nobility. The number of inhabitants is said to be 16,000.

We now made a visit to the celebrated field of *Cannæ*. The expression which is applied to designate the theatre, where

the pride of the monarch-people was humbled, gives a strong idea of the traces which this terrible catastrophe has left on the mind, and of the consternation which seized the people of that day, and which has descended to their posterity—the plain is called, *Il campo di sangue*, or the Field of Blood. It is very sterile, and contains only a few scattered villages, and crowds of cattle which with their rude conductors wander about in the pathless waste. After having left on our right the Adriatic and the Castle of Barletta, situate some miles from that town at the mouth of the Ofanto, we crossed that river by a bridge. This stream is the ancient Aufidus, which, in the sanguinary contest at Cannæ, was covered with floating corpses. When we had crossed the river we entered an immense plain, which, as far as the eye could reach, did not contain a single tree. We were only interrupted by numerous flocks, which were spread over this sterile land; from morning to night nothing was heard but the barking of shepherd-dogs, the shouts of their masters, and the sound of their horns, with which they answered one another, or collected their flocks.

We passed some very miserable villages—San Cassano, La tomba, and Cirignola; between Cirignola and La Stornara we passed the two branches of the *Tratturo delle pecore*, which lead from Foggia the capital of the province—the one towards Ascoli, the other towards Canosa. We arrived very late at Ortona, an inn surrounded by some huts, where we could get nothing but rushes to sleep on. Having foreseen the absolute nakedness of this land, we luckily provided ourselves with some viands, which it would have been impossible to procure there.

It is now time to give some account of the *Tavoliere* of La Puglia, of which we have traversed the greater part. They give this name to the tract of land which lies between the Adriatic and the Apennines, and which extends from Civitave to Andria, in length about 70 miles, and in breadth 30. This vast plain of pasturage is frequented by a set of people, whose cattle successively consume the herbage of every part; yet it would maintain more human creatures than it does cattle at present, if the system of pasturage, which is favoured by the Government from pecuniary motives, were not preferred to tillage. At the present moment the *Tavoliere* supports immense flocks of sheep, and the revenue arising from it is reckoned at 425,600 ducats.

At some miles from Ortona we began to remark the progress of vegetation; first a few thickets, and then some plantations of olives, which certainly were sufficiently distant from one another. At length we perceived the mountains so long



wished for, and by their blue tint could see they were covered with vast forests; as we approached them we felt a sensation of delight which can be experienced by none but painters—their forms gradually expanded, and the outlines of each became visible, and we could distinguish the different kinds of trees with which they were covered, and the little villages and rural habitations built on their sides. We now began to ascend a more elevated country; the cattle of Sauri is the first object in this interesting picture; it commands the plain intersected by the windings of the Cervaro; Bovino next presented itself to our attention.

This town must formerly have been of much importance, if we may judge by the ruins with which it is surrounded, and the marbles, medals, and other antiquities which are found in turning the ground. We had 20 miles to go ere we reached Ariano, so having dined in haste, favoured by the most beautiful weather we gave ourselves up to all the enchantment of the sylvan pictures, which unfolded themselves to our eyes during the remainder of this, and for several succeeding days. Sometimes the road lay along narrow parapets, raised on and bounded by deep declivities; sometimes it was elevated on lofty causeways, and now it was formed of bridges thrown from rock to rock, in order to leave a free passage to the wintry torrents; farther on it descended with a gentle slope to the bottom of the vallies; then we followed the windings of streams, whose rapid waters dashed past rocks which impeded their course, or finding a smoother channel, murmured through the meadows, beneath the shade of nut-trees and alders.

Although it was late in the year, vegetation was still rich and abundant; in the plains which we had quitted the trees had become bare, and the meadows scorched up by the heat, and covered with dust: but here the trees bore the rich livery of autumn, the vines glowed with a purple hue, and the transparent grapes fostered by a refreshing dew, hung in clusters from the extremity of the branches. The hills were covered with orchards, from which Pomona filled her ruddy baskets, and the summits of the mountains were clothed with the unfading verdure of the pine.

Occasionally, isolated and arid rocks rose before us, crowned with ancient castles, whose pyramidal keeps were now only the refuge of ravens, or the boast of noble families, whose origin they recalled. The picture varied every instant; when we traversed, in the morning, a deep valley, the shadows of the mountains generally covered the greater part of it, while the opposite heights burned with all the rays of the rising

sun; these rays darting through the summits of the rocks, pierced in luminous columns the mass of dense vapours which were collected in the valley; while at night the immense disk of that brilliant luminary sinking before us, illuminated all our path. Before it disappeared, it seemed to communicate a rapid motion to a million of floating atoms in the inflamed atmosphere, which, as it sunk, were plunged, like ourselves, into the shade and the stillness of night.

I have traversed many countries, all celebrated for the beauty of their scenery; I have travelled through Greece, Italy, and Switzerland, and the livelier plains of my own country, but I have no where met with such a rich union of picturesque objects as in the kingdom of Naples.

The climate of this province is more temperate, and the air more pure than that of Campania; the towns are almost all of them built upon the sides of hills; the elevation of the ground, and its mountainous form, render it colder than Campania; indeed, frost commences at the end of October, but the rivers never are frozen. This province produces good marble, and has a salt mine at Monte-Fuscoli. Notwithstanding the feudal system, it is the best peopled part of the kingdom after Campania; the pasture-grounds are few; as for thefts, the number was so great that we left off counting them; we lost several little articles by the way, but all our inquiries after them were vain; all the answer we got was an articulate sound, a grimace, or a shrug of the shoulders, as though they mocked us. Having left an article of some value at our inn we despatched a messenger back for it, having the politeness to pay him before hand: the consequence was, that neither messenger or property ever made their appearance.

At length we perceived Ariana, situated on a range of high rock which rose in the midst of a plain washed by the *Calore* and the *Tripaldo*; we reached the town after many windings, for our course resembled that of a vessel in distress, which is obliged repeatedly to tack in order to enter the port. The fatigue of our horses, which had ceased to regard the admonitions of the whip, the coldness of the evening air, and the calls of hunger increased our impatience, which seemed to afford much diversion to our driver; he insisted on the advantages of the impregnable situation of the town; he boasted of the purity of the air, and the beauty of the prospect, and answered all our pressing inquiries by the words *adesso, adesso, arriviamo, ci vuol flegma*. We had need of all our patience not to lay a hearty malediction on the men, whose madness had led them to build their habitations out of human reach.

Ariano is a miserable town; all its manufactures consist of

common earthenware: the soil is mixed with marine remains. The country between Ariano and Avellino presents some very picturesque prospects; sometimes embosomed in rocks, and amid the deepest solitude, we listened to the rush of the torrents, the cries of the birds of prey, and the roar of the winds which swept through the clefts of the mountains. Farther on we found ourselves buried in the deep silence of woods which seemed impenetrable. On leaving the forests the scene changed, and as we emerged we perceived by the noise of a mill, the barking of dogs, or the *zampogna* (the pipe of a shepherd,) that we were in the neighbourhood of human habitations. At last the plain of Avellino was spread before our eyes in all its richness.

There is not a spot in it uncultivated; every part is covered with vegetation; orchards are mingled with vines, and meadows with corn-fields: all the gifts of Nature are lavished most luxuriously, which delight the eye, and rejoice the senses. Magnificent avenues of trees lead to the gates of the town; and, as the traveller enters, he recognizes the bustle of commerce and industry, the footsteps of the arts, and all the appearance of a populous city.

On the *Monte Vergine* there is a convent of white Benedictines, founded about 1134; the cemetery of the convent is considered as a curious object; it is a vast cavern on the same level with the church, and is cut in the rock: it has the singular property of preserving the bodies deposited in it, in the freshness of the period of their dissolution. On leaving this town we left Monte Vergine on our right; the appearance of this mountain is curious, it is sprinkled over with chapels, oratories, and crosses, the whole length of the winding way which leads to the sanctuary. The buildings present a very picturesque outline, and the whole effect is almost theatrical.

### LETTER III.

*Arrival at Naples—Character of the Neapolitans—Vesuvius—Castel-nuovo—View from the Gulf of Naples—Visit to Pouzzuole—Grotto of Pausilypo—Curious effect of the sun-beams—Singular phenomenon—Remains of Antiquity—The Solfatara Tomb of Virgil—and of Sanazaro.*

WE are in Naples! The city of which the Italians themselves are at a loss for expressions of sufficient admiration, compressing their praise into the proverb—*See Naples and die!*



As we approached we entered the walks which extend from the gates of the city, bordered with fountains, chapels, and houses of entertainment ; a little later and it would have been pleasant enough, but at present it was nothing but a scene of noise, dust, and disorder—only imagine crowds of peasants in every description of dress, carts loaded with the produce of the country jostling brilliant equipages preceded by outriders, open carriages, and horsemen spurring through the crowd, and in the midst of this confusion our melancholy vehicle dragged slowly on by our tired horses.

The Neapolitan delights in ease, pleasure, and noise ; he is full of vivacity, speaks quickly, and at great length ; and he has great power of comic expression in his gestures, which are innumerable ; much attached to fetes and shews, nothing is seen but rope-dancers, pickpockets, puppet-shows, and ballad-singers : they make great use of the tambourine, of the castanets, or *nacchere*, and of the *colascino*, a two-stringed instrument. Their religious festivals are generally preferred, and they certainly are very brilliant. The churches seem to be converted into theatres, and resound with light and cheerful sounds ; the audience turn their backs on the altar, and fix all their attention on the orchestra. The processions are an object of great curiosity ; they extend to an immense length, as almost the whole population of the city is enrolled in some one of the fraternities of white, blue, grey, or black penitents.

The pleasures of the table are much sought after by the Neapolitans, the least sober of all the Italians. During the carnival, and the great festivals, the streets seem loaded with viands, which are scarcely sufficient to supply the consumption of the day ; at every corner stand immense baskets of maccaroni, which the passengers carry away by handsfull ; while ices are distributed from coolers filled with snow. At another place you may see them measuring out to the Lazzaroni the coffee, which they call *levante*, and which if it does not possess the fine flavour, at least has the colour. Pride and misery, which in great capitals border so nearly on one another, present in Naples a striking picture ; individuals who sport splendid equipages, lacqueys, and couriers clothed in rich liveries, live in the most restricted style in the interior of their palaces, of which they perhaps only inhabit the garrets.

The Lazzaroni, however, seem to boast of their poverty ; they walk bare-footed, and frequently without shirts, and sleep in such places as the recesses of a church. These people are completely unincumbered, without a hearth, and without a home, they live continually in the open air ; as soon as they have collected a few *carlini*, they spend them in a glass of ice,

or some boiled *maccaroni*; they then fall to sleep, till urged again by necessity to seek their little sum of money, that they may once more enjoy their *benedetto far niente*. There are many different accounts given of the *Lazzaroni*: some pretend that they form a separate body, and elect a king who enjoys a pension, and that their number amounts to 40,000, all which is false—the population of Naples is only 400,200, and it is very improbable that a tenth part of it should be composed of *Lazzaroni*.

In the manners, institutions, and even language of the Neapolitans, the footsteps of strangers are visible; the French more especially have left many traces of their dominion; their name even is become the generic designation of strangers, and the word Frank is applied to every foreigner. The Greek origin of the Neapolitans may be still perceived in their physiognomy and their character; they possess the intelligence and quickness of perception, and even the manual address for which the Greeks were remarkable; they are like them lovers of noise, joy, and pleasantry, and of mimicry and satirical productions; we therefore find amongst them the best mimics: the facetious Tiberio Fiorelli, who gained such celebrity in France, under the name of Scaramouch, came from Naples.

One of the greatest objects of my curiosity on my arrival at Naples was *Vesuvius*; my surprise and disappointment were great on beholding this celebrated mountain—I had imagined to myself a volcano ploughed into deep furrows by streams of lava, which marked with black traces their devastating path; I thought to walk amongst hanging rocks, demolished edifices, and the crumbling ruins of the mountain over which clouds of thick floating smoke passed, forming a scene almost resembling one of the mouths of Tartarus: in fact, however, I only saw a hill of ordinary dimensions, of a broad conical shape, without any variety in its appearance, without any inequality in its declivity, of an uniform ashy colour, and the crater of which exhales a little vapour, which is only perceptible in the morning and at evening, when the rays of the sun fall upon it obliquely. No doubt the volcano, filled with fire and flame, burning in the darkness of night, and terrifying the country, its bellowing and shaking would have produced a livelier impression on my senses, than this dark and sterile mass which rises in the midst of a flourishing country. Nevertheless, when one thinks how a whole people can gaily dance and sing on the edge of this terrific precipice—that their harvests, their orchards, and their delicious villas, are supported by a thin bed of earth, clothed indeed with the

most verdant carpet, but undermined by ever-burning fires, which may at any moment engulf them—this contrast of animated and vigorous life with a spot where every thing languishes and dies—this opposition of the brightest colours with an uniform grey and livid tint—the silent crater, and the profound but deceitful calm—all inspire a melancholy kind of feeling, and a conviction of disaster, which persuade us of the emptiness of human pursuits, and speak of peril and death.

Castel nuovo, from which there is a fine view of Vesuvius, is a favourite promenade of the Neapolitans, who walk there for the sake of enjoying the pure air, and the odours of the flowers with which the valleys are covered; they are wafted by the land-breeze very regularly, which every evening sweetens and refreshes the streets of Naples, which are parched by the heat of the sun—it re-animates the over-fatigued frames of the inhabitants, communicate fresh vivacity to the spirits, and gives birth to festivities and pleasures which stretch far into the night.

The view of Naples from the sea has been compared to that of Constantinople, and it is said these two cities form the most beautiful pictures of the kind in the world; but Naples is infinitely more picturesque, and it owes this advantage to the disposition of the ground, which, by its winding and abrupt pines, displays the edifices of the city better, towering above each other, and yet gives the masses sufficiently detached and distinct, while the borders of the Bosphorus, in general level or rounded into hills, present lines of great length without variety of form, and without contrast of effect.

In arriving in the Gulf of Naples, leaving the isles of Ischia and Capree, which seem like advanced guards, the most beautiful pictures break upon the sight; on the left the steep rocks of Procita stretch from Cape Misene, behind which the Gulf of Pouzzuole is seen, overshadowed by Monte Barbaro.—As the gazer approaches, the interest is concentrated, and his eye takes in the prospect between Pausilypo and Mount Vesuvius: Naples occupies the centre, and its edifices rise in groups behind Santa Elma, the Acropolis of the ancient Parthenope.

To enjoy this view an hour should be chosen favourable to picturesque effect; the traveller should enter his boat towards the close of day—the sun is setting behind the tomb of Virgil, surrounding it with his resplendent rays; not yet concealed behind the point of Pausilypo, he still sheds his lights on the remains of antiquity, which lie dispersed on the shores of Pouzzuole, and he at last plunges himself into the sea between the promontory of Misene and the isle of Procita, though he still gilds behind us the rocky cliffs of Anacapri.



The evening deepens, and the clear azure of the sky is painted with the colours of the rose and the violet, and then with a grey silvery tint, the soft shadowing of the mantle of night, through which even now a few trembling stars are visible—the breeze dies, the waves grow tranquil, the sea becomes smooth and transparent; and the star of Venus, reflected in the waters, shines like a diamond swimming on their surface, while the voices of the sailors rise upon the air singing their evening hymn.

After having tasted all the sweets of the deepest calm, and enjoyed the most sublime beauties of Nature, the noise and bustle of the city was more than I could bear, and I hastened to repose.

Although it is late in the year the weather is beautiful, and the atmosphere is as pure as in any of our summer days; the plains are still green; there is no season more favourable than this for visiting the delicious banks of Pouzzuole. I set off with my friend in a *calesso*, a vehicle drawn by one horse, and we traversed the populous streets of the city, dashing over the pavement, and piercing the crowd with the speed of light, and grazing and crossing other carriages, which flew as quickly, yet without any other injury than the anxiety occasioned by the rapidity of our course; when we arrived on the quay of Chiaya, our horse redoubled his speed, and in a moment we reached the grotto of Pausilypo.

At sun-set in this place, but only at this period of the year, a very picturesque effect may be observed; the horizontal beams grazing the side of the grotto, penetrate into the cavity, and illuminate all the length of it; and when you pass at this moment, the particles of dust always in motion, have all the appearance of a stream of flame, with which the passengers are dazzled, and almost suffocated, and immersed in which they seem only like transparent shadows.

On leaving the grotto we drove to a village called *Fuori-Grotta*, and then through a country where the trees were twined together by festoons of vines; after that we entered a long avenue of poplars, leaving Cape Pausilypo on the left, and on the right the *Vomero* covered with beautiful villages and seats, overtopped by a delicious hermitage, from which all the *Campania felice* is seen, and even a part of the Roman states. The sea, with all its isles, lay before us; the road is cut amongst the rocks, and a numerous body of galley slaves was employed in repairing it. The miserable lot of these wretches causes many melancholy reflexions, and casts over the laughing landscapes a shade which tarnishes its beauty.

The history of Pouzzuoli is well known; celebrated in the time of the Romans for the unbridled luxury and voluptuous-

ness of its inhabitants; it was destroyed by an earthquake. The declivity of the hill, at the foot of which the modern city is built, is covered with the ruins of ancient edifices and temples; that of Jupiter Serapis is alone distinguishable by its form. The foundations exist entire; three columns are still standing, and the fragments of the others lie scattered about; this temple was magnificent, though of small proportions and of a circular form.

The three columns present a singular phenomenon, which has never been explained in a satisfactory manner; these columns, and many of the others which have been overthrown, are perforated nearly all at the same height in the form of a ring, by a little marine worm (the *mitylus lithophagus*). Some people pretend that this is a proof that at some period the waters of the sea have flowed much above their present level, and that they have left these traces on the shores of Pouzzuole; but this assertion, though supported by many clever men, seems by no means satisfactory; for how can it be supported, that an inundation, which must have covered a part of Europe, and have lasted long enough to have allowed these worms to pierce the marble, has left no trace in history, and that there are no marks of its remaining but on the coast of Pouzzuole? The real cause probably is, that these columns have been all cut from the same quarry, which has contained a bed of marine petrifications, softer than the base of marble, which, being decomposed, have left the cavities with which the column is pierced.

On ascending the hill we meet with subterraneous remains bordering the road, belonging to some ruins which they call the Temple of Neptune; a little higher there are some remains of a Temple of Diana, the ruins of an ancient way, and an aqueduct, of which some portions are well preserved. The last object is an amphitheatre, the seats of which, no longer visible, are entirely covered with little gardens. On leaving the amphitheatre our guide conducted us to the *Via Campana*, an ancient consular road, which forms a continuation of the *Via Appia*; it is bordered with tombs constructed by the ancient inhabitants of Pouzzuole; the sepulchral chambers are varied in their forms, but are built in a good style; they are all built of brick covered with stucco, or with cement, on which are still distinguishable the remains of paintings of exquisite taste. If these tombs have been violated, it is owing to the shameless curiosity of modern times, when the sacred asylums have been overthrown in search of vases containing only tears, or some few pieces of gold mixed with cinders!

Continuing to ascend, the traveller arrives at a sort of inclo-





TOMB OF VIRGIL.



sure, which is clearly the crater of an ancient volcano: it is the *Solfatara*. The mouth of the crater is immense: surrounded by arid rocks, the centre is crowned with a wood of young chesnut-trees; a winding pathway, overshadowed by their foliage, conducts us to the alum mines and to the *Solfatara*. On the way our guide related to us some curious facts respecting this place. Thus, if you dig to the depth of one foot, the stones which lie there are too hot to be held in the hand; if you stamp violently on the ground it returns a sound which seems to indicate the existence of great cavities.

But the most extraordinary appearance is that of the columns of smoke which rise from the crevices of the ground, covering it with crystallizations of every colour. To catch the full effect of this spectacle it is necessary to stand on the side from which the wind blows, or it is still better to wait till the atmosphere is calm. The vapour then rises in thick twisted columns of brilliant whiteness; they whirl around, enlarging as they ascend, and at last they seem to dissolve into air, leaving no trace in the azure sky. An attempt was made to establish an alum manufactory where these vapours issue most abundantly, but the fevers which attacked the workmen caused it to be relinquished.

In descending the steep sides of the crater, by a very difficult path we visited the fountain of *Pischiarelli*, which appears to takes its course from the furnace of *Solfatara*. The waters possess strong medicinal properties. Tired with our journey, we stood in need of repose, of freshness, and of shade, and we found them all on the borders of the limpid lake of *Agnano*, where we enjoyed a rural repast.

As we ascended a hill an ancient edifice, covered with verdure and crowned with laurel, met our view. The following inscription was traced upon the rock:

QUÆ CINERIS TUMULO HÆC VESTIGIA? CONDITUR OLIM

ILLE HIC, QUI CECINIT PASCUA, RURA, DUCES.

It was the tomb of Virgil! Time has shewn less respect to this last asylum of the illustrious dead, than to his unperishing glory: the monument is in ruins, and the interior is empty. (See Plate II.)

The memory of great names adds beauty to the most desolate scene. I was now surrounded by objects, which to the most picturesque charms, added the interest of having been described by Homer and by Virgil. There, *Avernus*, the marshes of *Acheron*, and the grotto of the Sibyl, lay stretched before me; farther on, the city of *Cumæ*, and the perfumed hills of *Falernia*. At my feet was the superb *Parthenope*, and the sea of *Misene*, while my eye rested on the



isles which adorned its bosom; then turning off at Capree, it rapidly glided along the shores of Lorrente, along the Lattarian mountains, the rock of Hercules, and the ruins of Stabia, Pompeii, and Herculaneum. At last it reposed on temples, on marble palaces, and all the beautiful edifices of the capital, whose low murmurs, and light wreaths of smoke, scarcely reached my elevated station.

It is said that the tomb of Virgil was constructed by the orders of Augustus in the bosom of the villa which the poet possessed upon the borders of Pausilypo, and where a great portion of his work was composed. The younger Pliny informs us that this country residence was afterwards the property of Silius Italicus, who was consul after the death of Nero. He was formerly the owner of the villa to which Cicero gave the name of the Academy. Silius delighted to meditate in the very spots where Virgil drew his inspiration, and which prompted his own muse in the composition of his poem on the African war. The tomb of the immortal poet was to him an object of worship, and he suffered not a single day to elapse without visiting it. This monument, the situation of which is pointed out, in the place where it is now seen, by Ælius Donatus, a grammarian of the fourth century, now presents only ruins, of which the original design can hardly be conjectured. It is covered with a vault constructed in *opus reticulatum*; in the interior are seen several niches, to which access is only obtained by irregular passages opened by violence about the year 1326, until which period a sarcophagus remained in the tomb, supported by nine small columns of white marble, and containing the ashes of the poet. These venerable relics were removed by King Robert of Anjou, who was anxious for their safety, and transported to Castel-nuovo, where, notwithstanding the researches of Alphonso I. of Arragon, they have never since been seen. In the time of Eugenius, about the year 1625, the following inscription was dug up in the neighbourhood:—

*"Siste Viator, quæso; parce, legito, hic Maro situs est."*

On leaving the ancient heritage of Virgil, the eye enjoys a prospect of the greatest richness. Pathways, winding down gentle declivities, border the edges of the rocks.—They are supported by enormous walls, pierced with arcades, and flanked by counter-forts. Houses, embosomed in gardens, rise on these ramparts in the form of steps. These are again surmounted by terraces, rendered impenetrable to damp by cement, and on which flourish the arbutus and the vine. These aerial bowers guard the habitations from the rays of the sun, and make the most delightful retreats, which, catching the refreshing sea-breeze, temper the heat of the atmosphere. During the

night, especially, the most delicious freshness is found here. Many persons pass the night on these terraces under no other roof than the vault of heaven, or the shade of the trees, a pleasure well appreciated under the serene sky of Naples, and in the warm, dry, and healthy climate of Greece.

At the foot of the mountain, on the borders of the sea, at the extremity of the beautiful piers, which in this spot stretch out in semi-circles, rise the church and convent of Santa Maria del Parto, celebrated for the tomb of Sanazaro, the Virgil of the Neapolitans.

King Frederic, who was much attached to the poet, gave him this agreeable retreat, with a house which he had built there. Sanazaro took great delight in embellishing the solitude which he never afterwards quitted, and whose charms he unceasingly celebrated.

We may judge of his despair, when, during the siege of Naples by the French in 1528, Lautrec, having made this place his head quarters, was attacked there by the Prince of Orange. They fought with great fury on both sides; at last, Lautrec was defeated, but the Casino and its plantations were destroyed. The poet, in grief, quitted Naples, and died soon afterwards, leaving this estate to the monks of the Holy Virgin, that they might erect, on the ruins of his favourite retreat, a church, which he endowed with an income of six hundred ducats, and to which was given the name of *Santa Maria del Parto*, in remembrance of one of Sanazaro's poems, entitled, *De Partu Virginis*.

The relations of Sanazaro carried his body to Naples, and raised a magnificent tomb to him in the church of Santa Maria, at the foot of the mountain where the ashes of Virgil repose, and on it were inscribed the following lines, written by the celebrated Cardinal Bembo :—

“ Da Sacro cineri flores. Hic ille Maroni

“ Sincerus Musâ proximus ut tumulo.\*

The Neapolitan bard wrote on the model, and indeed caught many of the beauties, of his master. Like him he sung of the Shepherds, and the pleasures and labours of the country; but, instead of depicting heroes, he has produced, in the poems on which he rested his reputation, a most extravagant mixture of Christian mysteries and mythological fables. Although his Latin poetry is written with great purity, and in his Italian poems, and particularly in his *Arcadia*, there is much delicacy

\* “ Fresh flowerets strew, for Sanazar lies here,

“ In genius, as in place, to Virgil near.”

Roscoe's *Leo X.* v. 3, p. 389.

Accius Sincerus was the academical name of Sanazaro.

and simplicity, yet it may perhaps be said, that his talent has more facility than originality, more grace than vigour. In short, to mingle with the poets of antiquity, he seems to have resigned his rank amongst the poets of modern times.

The tomb of Sanazaro has been the subject of much lively discussion amongst the historians of the arts; and, as it is well designed and executed, the glory of it is attributed to several different artists. Some assign it to Gio-Angelo Poggibonsi, a Tuscan; others to Girolamo Santacroce, a Neapolitan.

The executors of the poet, and the brothers of the convent of Margellina, formed themselves into two parties, when the monument was to be erected. The former declared themselves in favour of the design modelled by Santacroce; the monks wished Poggibonsi, who was one of their order, to undertake the whole work. At last they came to an arrangement, and each of the artists had a portion of the work assigned to him.

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## LETTER IV.

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### *Description of Pompeii.*

**I** CANNOT quit this part of Italy without giving some account of the Museum of Portici, which contains a very complete collection of antiquities, discovered in the bosom of the earth, still perfect, and in the very situation in which they were surprised by the dreadful scourge which at the same time overwhelmed the cities of Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabia. (See plate III.)

Portici is a country residence of the King of Naples, who frequently visits it with his court. This palace, which commands a magnificent view of the sea is surrounded by beautiful gardens, planted on the base of Mount Vesuvius. It was built in the year 1738, by Charles of Bourbon, who also founded the Museum. This immense collection consists of a vast number of bronze and marble statues, of pictures, and of vases of gold, of silver, and of earthen-ware still more precious. On one side are seen articles of furniture elegantly designed, such as tables, curule chairs, tripods, lamps and candelabra; on the other, instruments of agriculture, of chirurgery, of music, and kitchen utensils. In another quarter are arms offensive and defensive, jewels and other appendages of the toilette; intaglios, cameos, and other precious stones set in rings, in pins, and bracelets. We find there also colours for painting, eggs, cheese, walnuts,





*Socle & den. 155. Grand*

POMPEII.





and leguminous vegetables, the forms of which are still distinguishable. There are even some remains of wine and oil. One of the greatest curiosities is an entire library, which once was the delight of some scholar of the Augustan age, and which creates despair in our own; for all the rolls of Papyrus have been either reduced to a cinder or destroyed by damp. The latter fall into dust the moment they are touched, and the others only owe their superior preservation to the heat which has calcined them. With skill and industry, it is even possible to unfold them, and to put them into a condition to be read and transcribed. The famous Padre Antonio Piaggi, the inventor of the process, has as yet unfolded only a very small number. The slowness of his operations, and, above all, the disappearance of a great part of these precious manuscripts, are causes of just complaint.

It was in the first age of the Christian era, and in the reign of Titus, when that violent eruption of the volcano occurred which destroyed several cities, and filled all Italy with consternation. To the ruin which seemed to have extinguished them for ever, Herculaneum, Stabia, and Pompeii, are indebted, for their miraculous preservation and their present celebrity. Herculaneum and Pompeii stood near each other, but the history of the latter is but little known; it was a sea-port town, situated about five miles distant from the crater of Vesuvius, at the mouth of the Sarno. Its harbour was common to the inhabitants of Nola, of Nocera, and of Acera, but the eruption of the volcano changed its site, or, rather, that of the river, which now flows several leagues distant from its former bed. The lava and the ashes filled up the port, and created a new shore, which encroached to a great extent upon the sea.

Pompeii had been much injured by the earthquake, in the year 63, and it was entirely buried by the eruption of 79,—the first-mentioned in history, and fatally celebrated for the great number of cities which it destroyed, for the multitude of its victims, and for the death of Pliny. Herculaneum, much nearer the volcano, was overwhelmed by a hard and compact substance, which it has been necessary to dig out with infinite labour, in order to disengage the monuments. This substance, in its fluid state, had penetrated into the remotest recesses, and had filled them as if with molten lead; whilst Pompeii had only disappeared under a shower of loose ashes. These it was easy to remove, since they only rose a few inches above the edifices. This shower of stones and burning matter extended as far as Castello a Mare, the ancient Stabia, and covered the country for thirty miles round, but with an intensity decreasing

*VOYAGES and TRAVELS, No. 5, Vol. III. E*

in proportion to its distance. At Pompeii there fell stones weighing as much as eight pounds, and at Stabia not more than an ounce.

In 1689, on turning up the earth in the neighbourhood of Vesuvius about a mile from the sea, some antique inscriptions were found, making mention of the city of Pompeii, which was not suspected to have existed on that spot, and this discovery produced no further consequences. However, in 1713, the Prince D'Elbeuf, a general officer in the Austrian service, built a country house, at Portici, a beautiful spot, but almost deserted. Having occasion for some blocks of marble, he was informed that an inhabitant of the village, in sinking a well, had discovered a large quantity. The prince purchased the land; and his workmen, having discovered a vault, penetrated into it, and found several fine fragments of marble statuary. Encouraged by this circumstance, the prince redoubled his researches, which produced so many remarkable acquisitions, that the jealousy of the Neapolitan government induced it to assume to itself the direction of the works. At last, at the depth of 70 feet there was discovered an entire city—the ancient Herculaneum, with its temples, its theatres, its private houses, replete with marble and bronze statues, with pictures, and with furniture; and, in a word, with every thing which the unforeseen and sudden catastrophe had allowed no time to remove.

It seemed impossible to restore Herculaneum to the light of day, because the earth which covers them now supports the cities of Portici and Castello a Mare; but, the true site of Pompeii having been fortunately discovered under land little adapted to cultivation, it was easy to obtain possession of it, and it was determined to disengage that city from the mass of ashes which concealed it.

The first excavation, made in 1755, discovered by a singular and fortunate chance, the road which led to the gate of the city. It has three passages: that in the middle for carriages; and the two others, which are much narrower, for foot passengers. The road, paved with irregular blocks of lava, and lined with causeways, runs into the interior of the city, not in a direct line, but in a winding course, and varying considerably in breadth. Before entering the city, we see the tombs, according to the custom of the ancients, on each side of the road; and, at a little distance, a country house, having a court ornamented with columns; it is raised only a single story from the ground, beneath the level of which are found dining apartments, and other rooms, which were used as cellars, or as retreats from the heat of the weather.

The houses of the ancients had not, in general, like ours, a

multitude of stories, rising one above another; they were unacquainted with those long suites of apartments which luxury and wealth have since introduced. The rooms are small, without any communication between themselves, and often only lighted by the door. They all opened into a portico, something similar to the cloisters of a convent, which surrounded a small court where the air was refreshed by a little fountain. The upper story was lighted by a few narrow windows; those which opened on the street were situated like the windows of the Turks, about six feet from the ground, and were closed by leaves of talc, by plates of alabaster, and sometimes by little squares of unpolished glass; this construction prevented the inhabitants from seeing what passed out of doors, and also protected them from the impertinent inspection of others. Timber wood was rarely used in the construction of these houses, and its place was supplied by arches; and, in general, the roofs terminated in terraces. The floors were inlaid with Mosaic work, and the external walls were covered with paintings, worked on beautiful stucco.

In visiting Pompeii, a striking resemblance is found between its buildings and those of the Levant, and particularly of the modern Greeks. We find there those low seats running round the apartments, on which the inhabitants, no doubt, reposed, as in Turkey, on cushions, carpets, and pillows. These seats are raised about a foot from the floor, which prove pretty clearly that the ancients sat in the oriental mode, a fact which is further supported by the seats in the theatres. We also find in the Levant, marble pavements, Mosaic works, paintings on the walls, fountains in the courts, and even in the interior apartments, windows removed from sight; rooms lighted only by the door opening into covered galleries supported by columns. The vapour-baths of the orientals; their painted, gilt, and sculptured tombs; their sepulchral edifices, situated at the gates of the city, at the side of the high roads, and surrounded with public walks; the same arrangement of the shops; the foot-paths raised in front of the houses, and along the roads: all these customs of the Levant are founded on antique usages. The resemblance is such, that these ruins appeared to me the remains of a Turkish city, with the exception of the architectural style of the public buildings; and if it had been inhabited by Orientals, I should have conceived it to have been built by them. In fact, a tolerably correct idea of the manners of the Romans may be formed amongst the Turks; while many vestiges of their arts are to be found in the Museum of Portici.

Amongst the buildings of Portici, one observation struck me



with astonishment,—the extraordinary diminutiveness of their proportions. The houses, the streets, the squares, of this city, seem to have been constructed for a race of pigmies. The principal street is only twelve feet wide; the others eight or ten. The lateral gates of the city are only four feet wide; some rooms are only six feet square. The walls of the town are only twenty-five or thirty feet in height, and the steps which lead to the ramparts will not admit two persons abreast.

This circumstance presents a striking contrast with the other antiquities of Italy, and particularly of Sicily; where we find colossal temples, with columns so enormous that a man can readily stand in one of their flutings, which are not less than eighteen inches wide. How can we reconcile the proportions of this minute city with the accounts of historians, which are calculated to aggrandize the works, and even the personal stature of the ancients?

Even in Rome itself, notwithstanding its immense extent, the common citizens occupied but little space. The houses of individuals must have been as confined as those of Pompeii, if we take into consideration, that half of the city was occupied by the immense palaces of the emperors, which alone were equal to small cities; by the circuses, the theatres, and an immense number of temples, chapels, baths, and gardens. It is true, that the Roman people spent the day in the open air, or in the public establishments, and therefore only stood in need of a small habitation to shelter them during the night.

It presents, in fact, a singular spectacle, when we behold this city, of so remote an origin, and discover in it the traces of those antique manners which the classical authors can only imperfectly display. The structures of the town, though somewhat injured in the higher stories, were, when discovered, perfect in other respects. The statues, the Mosaics, and even the pictures, preserved all their freshness; every article of furniture, every household utensil, remained in the spot which they had occupied sixteen centuries before; bread, wheat, fruits, although dried up, or slightly burnt, might still be recognised; and, above all, several bodies of the inhabitants were discovered in the attitudes and dress in which they had been surprized by death: some in the act of flying with their most precious jewels, or concealed in remote retreats; and others surprized at table, or stifled in the bath.



## LETTER V.

*Departure from Naples—Terracina—Temple of Jupiter Anxuris—Description of the Pontine Marshes—Arrival at Rome—First View of that City—Visit to Tivoli—Celebrated Men—Temple of the Sibyl—Scenery around Tivoli—Grotto of Neptune—Dreadful accident.*

NOTWITHSTANDING my desire to depart, I felt considerable pain on leaving Naples; my former companion was compelled to reside some time longer in that city, and my new fellow-traveller did not seem inclined to waste his thoughts in melancholy meditations. He was a young Roman who had been finishing his education at Naples, and who was impatient to return to his family to display the extent of his acquisitions. His memory certainly was well stored with an abundance of quotations and anecdotes which rendered his conversation very interesting. As we passed Gaeta he mentioned the Cecubian wines celebrated by Horace; at Capua he gave us the history of its destructive pleasures; here was Formianum, the favourite retreat of Cicero, and at this turn in the road he was perfidiously assassinated. In spite of my friend's entertaining exertions, I could not prevent myself from falling to sleep: my pitiless companion then raised his voice that he might converse with the postillion, but receiving no reply he consoled himself with singing a *canzonetta*. He wakened me to join in the chorus, in which our post-boy sung the base.

The appearance of the rocks of Terracina excited my curiosity and the loquacity of my companion. "It is," said he, "the Anxur of the ancients, the capital of the Volsci:" and he then related its ancient history. From the summit of Mount San-Angelo, and near the monastery of that name, are the ruins of some vast edifices attributed to Theodoric. After draining the Pontine marshes, and building Terracina, the sovereign of the Goths, struck with the beauty of the prospect, from these heights, built a magnificent palace here, and surrounded the city with walls and strong towers, many of which are still visible; but death surprised him ere he had completed his splendid undertaking. The remains also of a temple of Jupiter

Anxuris are seen here. Under the ruins there is an excavation opening towards the south. It is the work of nature, if we may judge from the stalactites which hang from the vaulted roof and cover the walls. On penetrating into the inner cavities of this grotto it is said the sound of winds and the dashing of waves is heard. It is thought that this cavern served as a retreat to some of the primitive Christians, who fled from persecution, to practice in this solitude their mysterious ceremonies. But the sulphureous waters, which rush forth from many parts of the rock, render it probable that it was formerly used as a bath; and some remains, such as were used as ornaments in the halls of baths being found here, strengthen this conjecture.

The pyramidal rock of Terracina, called *Pesculo*, or *Pescio Montano*, was formerly crowned with a strong fortress, which commanded the passage to Campania, and could have defended it against a numerous army. The rock is isolated on three sides, and is joined to the mountain by its base. It seems worked with the chissel, like a wall, to the height of upwards of two hundred feet.

After visiting all the curiosities of Terracina, I resolved to examine the famous Pontine marshes which extend nearly to the gates of that city. I took a guide, and our route lay over the summits of the mountains by the ancient road of Piperno, then descending into the marshes, traversing them sometimes in a *sandalo*, a flat and very light sort of boat, and sometimes meeting with dry and solid ground. My companion, who was to meet me at Cisterna the following day, filled my pockets with garlic, and furnished me with a flask of a certain liquor to defend me from the influence of the *aria cattiva*.

The Pontine marshes occupy a plain of twenty miles in length and ten miles in breadth, bordered on one side by the Appennines, and on the other by a chain of hills which run from Mount Circello, and separate the marshes into many little lakes, which appear to be formed by the waters of the sea. Between Mount Circello and Terracina the stagnant waters extend as far as the sea, into which the superfluous waters pour themselves. The portion of the Roman territory which the marshes occupy, was formerly so fertile that it was called *Feronia*, from a temple of that goddess, the patroness of vegetation. In fact, in the times of the Romans, the *ager Pontinus* was considered as the granary of Rome, and it was covered with towns and splendid edifices. Atticus, Mecænas, and even Augustus retired hither to enjoy the delightful picture of rural pleasures and labours. The hills were crowned with olive trees, and their sides blushed with the clusters of the vine, while the plains were intersected with streams and ponds.

Appius Claudius, when he was constructing the famous road which bears his name, and which passed over these marshes, was the first who raised the banks and cleansed this portion of the country overflowed with the unchecked streams. Under the consulate of Cornelius Cethegus the draining was continued, but it was not finally completed till the time of Augustus. This tract of land retained its salubrity for more than four centuries, till the incursion of the Barbarians, and the removal of the emperors.

Under Theodoric it was again proposed to drain it, but, at the end of the fifth century, the plague, famine, and, above all, the attacks of the Barbarians, caused the enterprize to be abandoned. The writers of this age speak with horror of the Pontine marshes. When the Goths were expelled from Italy the popes turned their attention to this undertaking; but Boniface VIII. was the first who seriously applied himself to this object. When the apostolic chair was transferred to Avignon these labours languished. They were again attempted by some of the Pontiffs, but without success.

It is to Pius VI. that the present improved state of these marshes is owing; who, after having pursued a well-advised plan, of which the experience of many years has proved the success, has changed the appearance, and even the nature of the place lately so frightful, and converted it into one vast garden. It is with pleasure no longer mingled with fear that the traveller proceeds through a magnificent avenue, straight, well-paved, and shaded with beautiful trees, and bordered by canals, the evaporations from which are said to be no longer noxious, serving merely to give freshness to the atmosphere.

Attempts are making to lead back the inhabitants to this deserted spot. Along the road four post-houses are built; and inns, granaries, mills, and bakehouses. There are also several houses built for the workmen and the superintendants. In addition to these a convent and a handsome church are found there. The lands have been divided, and some parts let on long leases. Villages will shortly rise, and then this plain, lately so unhealthy, will form once more the granary of Rome and the rest of Italy.

I rejoined my companion at Cisterna, and it was dark ere we reached the gates of Rome: and, on the following morning, my eyes opened on the ancient capital of the world. From my windows I could see innumerable palaces and cupolas of marble, and the summit of Trajan's column. I am absolutely distracted! I admire! I compare! I study!—One object attracts me and another calls off my attention; and I seem to wish in



one day to amass recollections to serve me the remainder of my life.

What a scene for an artist! The borders of the Tiber, the hills of the city, the shape of its walls, the immense heaps of ruins, the admirable variety of the gardens, which make you think you are wandering in the country when you are surrounded by the walls, all furnish the painter with studies and picturesque subjects, and with infinite sources of renewed delight. There is not a single bye-way which does not offer him an opportunity of exercising his pencil. Here the open gate of a house of ordinary pretensions displays at the bottom of the court a little fountain surmounted with some fragments of ancient sculpture, shaded by jasmine bowers; there a flight of stairs open to the air, leads to the summit of a terrace crowned with an arbour and bordered with vases of flowers, which the attentive hand of a young girl nurtures and cultivates: farther on the fragments of an aqueduct serve as a frame to the rich perspective. On one side a rude cabin, inhabited by an hermit, stands against an ancient palace of marble, of which there is nothing left but the front of a hollow wall, the unequal summit of which is decked with wall-flowers. Everywhere the new city rises on the ruins of the ancient kingdom of the Cæsars, while the magnificent marbles which form the modern tombs were fashioned for the city of Augustus or of Adrian.

It is this fortuitous mixture of distinct elements which gives Rome such charms;—it is the ideas which rise on surveying them, and the deep train of feeling which they occasion, that render this place so attractive in the eyes of the artist, and make him regret that he cannot consecrate his life to beholding it.

I pass my time in wandering about without design or determinate object; and if I have not yet seen the museums and the more precious monuments of art, at least I have caught the picturesque and moral character of Rome. I have become familiar with the inhabitants, and with the topography of their city. My portfolio is full of sketches, and my memory of delightful recollections.

I resolved to visit Tivoli before winter made any further advances. Leaving Rome by the gate of San-Lorenzo, a little less than a mile off, we passed the church of the same name, one of the most ancient of the Christian edifices. Its character is simple and imposing. Constantine is generally regarded as the founder, but it has been successively restored by Sixtus III. and several of the succeeding Pontiffs. Many of the architect-





COTTAGE OF THE SHEPHERDS OF LA PUGLIA.



TEMPLES OF VESTA AND OF THE SIBYL.



tural parts have been borrowed from still more ancient buildings. I passed over the Tiburtine road, bordered with the relics of innumerable tombs and temples. In the midst of these, quantities of cinerary urns are perpetually discovered, and inscriptions and other curious remains. Here stands the tomb of the haughty Pallas, the freedman of Claudius. Farther on lies the *Campo Verano*, beneath which are catacombs filled with the bones of Christian martyrs. Passing over a canal of the Solfatara I reached some baths called the Baths of the Queen; they are probably the remains of a villa belonging to Regulus, a famous juriconsult, mentioned by Pliny and Martial. I then arrived at the bridge of Lucano, which is terminated by the monument of the Plautian family, who possessed a superb villa at this spot: the tomb is of a circular form, resembling that of Cæcilia Metella. Constructed principally of travertine stone, it was faced with marble and ornamented with columns and statues. The decline of day made me hasten forwards to Tivoli.

Who can sleep the first night of their arrival at Tivoli? My delightful bed-chamber was close to the temple of the Sybil, or rather of Vesta, and in sight of a magnificent cascade. The stream dashes itself down, disappears, and separates into a thousand little currents in the subterraneous passages which pierce the mountain upon which this part of the city is built. (See Plate V.)

The fall of the waters produces a deafening sound, sometimes imitating the noise of thunder, according as the sound strikes directly on the ear, or is dispersed by the wind. Between me and the cascade lay the bridge, the church, and the town; and the effect of the moonlight on the river which flowed round the town was most beautiful.

How different was the scene when I beheld it in the morning, yet equally delightful! The heavens were cloudless, and the dashing of the cascade seemed softened, and it was mingled with sounds which told of the awakening of nature and of man. The chirping of swallows, the turning of mills, the noise of the horses' hoofs as they passed the bridge, the voices of the peasants, clothed in their best habits and hastening to church, the sound of the bells floating on the air, all announced a day of festival. It was indeed so to me to find myself at Tivoli! Nothing is pleasanter here than the perpetual chiming of the bells, so disagreeable in other places: it resembles in Italy a sort of ærial music. So well do this people, whose taste is so delicate in all the arts, know how to harmonize and time their sounds, and to produce intonations as correct as those with which nature has inspired their songs.



The ruins of the temple next drew my attention; situated, like an eagle's nest, on the pinnacle of hollow rocks, and surrounded by precipices down which the river dashes, this edifice of a circular form, is built in a style of architecture singular, rich, and elegant: of the eighteen Corinthian columns which surrounded it in the form of a detached peristyle, only ten now remain. The light must have entered by the door or through an opening in the roof, for the windows appear less ancient than the primitive building, the origin of which is unknown.

During the Augustan age the environs of Tivoli were the retreat of a crowd of celebrated men,—Virgil, Horace, Propertius, Varro, and lastly Mæcenas, the protector of letters, of arts, and of all those who cultivated such pursuits with success, fixed their residences on the borders of the Anio. Mæcenas built at Tibur a villa, or rather a city, the immense circuit of which is still filled with an infinite variety of beautiful edifices which almost seem destined for immortality. This wise Roman flying the noisy pleasures of the capital preferred the charms of a private life to the vanity of grandeur; and rejected the first offices of the state, offered to him by the most powerful ruler on earth, who was also his most intimate friend. In his Tiburtine villa Augustus frequently visited him; and in the house of Mæcenas the emperor sought consolation under the afflictions of sickness.

Tucca and Varus, both poets and courtiers of Augustus, the intimate companions of Mæcenas, were the persons who at the recommendation of Virgil introduced Horace to the friendship of their patron. The good offices of the latter were extremely important to the illustrious poet, who had embraced the party of Brutus and Cassius, for which offence his new protector procured him the pardon of his sovereign.

Horace made use of his favour with these great men to re-establish his fortunes; and Mæcenas gave him a small villa, built on the banks of the Anio. In this retreat, in the neighbourhood of Catullus, freed from all his cares and in the enjoyment of a voluptuous repose, he composed his immortal poems, and celebrated the praises of his benefactors.

The prosperity of Tivoli decreased at the death of those illustrious persons who had carried glory and pleasure into this fortunate corner of the earth. Quintillius died the first, and the prince of lyric poets wept over his death. Soon afterwards Virgil, seeing his end approaching, appointed Augustus, Mæcenas, and some of his other friends, his heirs, commanding them to commit his divine poem to the flames! Horace, as he seemed to have wished, preceded his protector to the tomb. Augustus became the possessor of the villa of Mæcenas



and passed there the remainder of his days. In the temple of Hercules, which was in the neighbourhood of this habitation, he administered justice to his subjects.

The inhabitants of Tivoli deplored the death of a sovereign, whose almost constant presence had been the means of carrying life, and prosperity, and riches into their city. They delighted to recal the memory of this prince by inscriptions on monumental stones; and they raised to Livia, his wife, a statue in the forum of Hercules.

I now laid a plan for disposing of my time during my residence at Tivoli, and I resolved on several excursions, refusing, however, the company of a guide. The Cicerone disenchanted me at Naples, and I dismissed them that I might not be stunned by their impertinent babble, and that I might receive answers only when I put questions. I was just on the point of commencing my first excursion when some large drops of rain fell, which were followed up by a long succession of showers. When it rains here it is in torrents.

The *Tramontana* has chased away the showers, and the dry leaves rustle as it blows. The ground is firm again, and the vapours which obscured the atmosphere have disappeared, and I can now set out on my first excursion. I hastened to the gate of San-Angelo through old houses built on the ruins of the magnificent villa of Manlius Vopiscus. There I beheld the road of the Cascatelles, a delightful route running along the crown of a hill, which extends in the shape of an amphitheatre: I perceived through the olives planted on the declivity, the Anio, which winds along and dashes itself into its deep and flinty bed. On the other side rise immense rocks, and the temple of Vesta; that of the Sibyl, and a portion of the city, crown their summit.

The most remarkable object during my excursion was the grotto of Neptune, which almost resembles the palace of that divinity. Only imagine an immense rock in which the force of the waters has scooped out a number of secret channels through which torrents burst forth to mingle in the gulph, where their murmurs resound; they fill the atmosphere with their spray; and the air is agitated by the rapidity of their motion.

The sound of the falling waters, repeated by the echoes, and varied by the winds, produces a singular and terrible harmony, in the midst of which the human voice, the sound of musical instruments, and even the report of fire-arms can scarcely be distinguished, and which appears to impose silence on the rest of nature, that the voice of the god of tempests may alone be heard.

At the bottom of these precipices scarce any other creatures

are seen but clouds of wild pigeons, which build their nests in the crevices of the rocks. Accustomed to the roaring of the waters they dash through the clouds of spray, sometimes darting into the depths of the grotto, and struggling with the current of air which seem to whirl them along.

On returning to the city I heard confused cries, rising above the voice of the elements. I quickened my steps, and at last distinguished, amongst others, the voice of a woman who rent the air with her cries. I saw the summit of the rocks lined with a crowd of people, running, shouting, and answering each other with every sign of terror and anxiety. I followed to the verge of a precipice hanging over the great cascade, and there beheld the disfigured body of a young man who had gone out in the morning to hunt on the steep banks of the river: not having re-appeared during the day, his friends, anxious for his safety, sought him amongst the moist and slippery rocks of Tivoli, which the hunters frequent, regardless of the danger, and they had now first discovered his body, suspended amongst the bushes which cloath the rocks of the great cascade. The cry of dismay spread through the valley till it reached the mother of the unfortunate victim. Fearful of the truth, she ran in agony to the borders of the precipice, and, hanging over it, she was only prevented by force from throwing herself forwards. In the mean time an intrepid hunter descended by means of ropes to the spot where his unfortunate companion lay—a lifeless form! Whilst they were drawing them up together the friends of the miserable mother endeavoured to remove her from the spot; but the convulsive movements which affected her increased to an alarming degree. They then determined to bring to her the body of her son. A heart-rending scene which I shall never forget ensued. After having bathed the corpse with tears, and loaded it with caresses; after having attempted to warm it in her bosom, she was at last convinced of the reality of her misery, she passionately exclaimed, “He is dead!” and fell senseless by his side.

## LETTER VI.

*The House of Catullus—Of Horace—English Caricatures—  
Temple of Tosse—Musical taste of the Italians—Description  
of the Ruins of the Villa Adriana—Rustics playing al porco—  
Return to Rome—Villas of Este and of Mecenas.*

**AN** ancient tradition says, that on this spot stood the house of Catullus. It is singular that the habitation of a poet like





*Nelle & son get vrand*

CASCATELLES.





Catullus should have become the retreat of austerity; but it may be remarked, that we ought generally to seek for the traces of the ancient villas on the scite of the convents. If there existed in the middle ages any vast and magnificent, but half-ruined building, it was converted into a church, and its dependant buildings became the habitations of the ministers of religion. In examining the houses of Pompeii, or in reading the description of an ancient villa, we perceive the most faithful imitation of them in the modern monasteries. The courts, surrounded by porticoes to walk in, and from which branch the chambers without any other communication between them; the basins which adorn them, the terraces or covered galleries, the oratories in the gardens, even the churches with the chapels often built like the halls of baths, all offer striking analogies to the houses of the ancients.

It is difficult to find a situation which agrees better than this with the idea which may be formed of the habitation of Catullus. In digging in this enclosure very beautiful pavements of different coloured marbles have been found, and a column on which was sculptured in bas relief figures of women representing the muses, or the graces: Horace was the neighbour of Catullus. I arrived at the dwelling of the poet by a very picturesque path, shaded by olive and chesnut-trees, laurels, and vines. This is, no doubt, the famous *Tiburni luculum*, where, in the time of Pliny, three immense chesnut-trees were seen, older even than Tiburnus who founded the city. Here also rose his tomb and his temple; for the people of Latium were accustomed to reckon their founders amongst the gods, and to raise altars to them. The house of Horace was not far off. I perceived through the trees a little convent, built of the remains of other structures, in a most picturesque situation. I had no further to go—I stood on the lands of the friend of Mæcenas! (*See Plate IV.*)

But all at once I beheld a spectacle which surprised and enchanted me, and even made me forget Horace, his house, and his verses. It was the *Cascatelles*! I had already beheld with a feeling amounting to solemnity this river precipitate itself into its deep and rocky bed; I now beheld it dancing in its course and burning in the rays of the sun, sometimes concealing itself, then re-appearing and bounding to the bottom of the valley, through verdure and through flowers. (*See Plate VI.*)

It is in the morning that these scenes should be visited;—then is the moment of inspiration and musing! The fresh sensations of the mind are not then harassed by the fatigue of the long and laborious day; they have found tranquillity in the arms of sleep, and we hasten to enjoy, in voluptuous delirium,

all the faculties of the imagination. With what delight did I cast myself under the shade of the ancient olive-trees, which I was willing to think were planted by the hands of Horace, or which adorned the immense possessions of Quintilius Varus!

A tradition, common amongst the inhabitants of Tivoli, points out the foundations of the little convent of San-Antonio as the scite of the poet's habitation. Situated on the right bank of the Anio, this villa, like that of Catullus, might be called either *Sabina*, or *Tiburtina*, according to what Suetonius says, who places it in the neighbourhood of the sacred forest of Tibur. Though Horace boasted of his poverty, it was only relative; he possessed a house in Rome, and rents, and stewards, and slaves: he did not consider himself rich, but enjoyed that *aurea mediocritas*—that happy competence equally removed from riches and from poverty, and he did not therefore excite the envy of his opulent neighbours. The steep scite which the house occupies proves that it was not spacious; a garden, sustained by terraces, stretched nearly to the borders of the river, and a wood of chesnut-trees, which still exist, formed a shelter against the burning heat of noon, and formed a walk which might be compared, said the poet, to the delicious groves of Tarentum. In short, this enchanting retreat where all the pleasures of the country and the charms of study might be enjoyed in peace, might well satisfy the wishes of a heart attached to solitude and literature.

From the modest retreat of Horace, I turned to the haughty habitation of Quintilius Varus, situated in front of that of Mæcenas, which it seemed desirous of rivaling in magnificence; this villa crowns the hill, at the foot of which runs the Tevere: on the other side, fronting the south, extend the ruins of the palace of Mæcenas. The waters, which add to the beauty of the scene, lose themselves amongst the ruins, and again seek the light through the crevices of the walls which they undermine.

Ancient fortifications, with embattled towers, which rival in height the spires of Christian churches, and the edifices of Tivoli, are disposed with a sort of picturesque symmetry on the table summit of a vast acclivity, whose sides, though steep, are covered with verdure. On every little shelf where the industry of man could convey a few baskets full of earth, are seen fruit-trees and vines; even the peaks of the rocks are cloathed with moss and tufts of herbs, the verdure of which is nourished by the humid mists which perpetually surround them. The streams flow from all sides with more or less abundance, and they are converted to useful purposes in turning mills for the manufacture of copper, iron, and other articles. After per-

forming these useful services they escape from the midst of the houses and trees, and embellish the country with the effect of their innumerable falls—producing those delicious *cascatelles* which form the delight of the traveller, and the despair of the landscape-painter. Now they glide from rock to rock, like silver threads; now they separate themselves, and shine like plates of metal—sometimes confined in a narrow bed they are covered with foam of snow-like whiteness: but how can even the first of the *cascatelles*, so abundant and so beautiful, be described at once? Imagine a river springing from many fountains uniting itself in one bed, and dashing headlong in columns of unequal size, which unite as they descend, and, ere they reach the bottom, form a cloud of sparkling spray; the waters then break upon pyramidal rocks resembling in their colours that beautiful mineral malachite: there the vapours, undergoing a metamorphosis, are converted into a liquid state, and, swelling through the rocks, burst forth, and surmounting every obstacle which opposed their course towards a less rugged channel, they gain their level, and, with it, their former transparency and beauty.

It was late when I returned to Tivoli—my dinner was spoiled and my wine was flat; but every thing appeared excellent to me—I had visited the *cascatelles* and the house of Horace!

The bad weather has detained me in the house; but fortunately the situation is extremely picturesque, and furnishes me, without going out of doors, with numerous prospects. I also enjoy another source of amusement; the walls of the rooms are covered with verses and sketches, the latter frequently the productions of good artists, who have wasted an hour or two in thus bestowing entertainment on succeeding travellers. The English artists seem to have carried the art of caricaturing to the highest state of perfection: one of them has lately ornamented the whole length of our hosts gallery with a sketch of the *post-asses* of Tivoli; that is to say, he has represented all the incidents of an excursion from hence to the Villa Adriana. I lost much of the merit of this pleasant caricature, from not being acquainted with the persons (of both sexes) that were represented in great variety, and extremely well expressed; but, independent of this, the sketch of the long-eared coursers was most excellent, and their ridiculous positions, and the other laughable incidents which often take place in large parties, afforded me much entertainment.

The following day the heavens grew clear, and at the break of day I set off with one of the sons of my host for my guide: on leaving the city by the *Porto delle Colle* there is a fine river, which I recommend to artists. We left on our right the



temple of *Tosse*, which ivy and climbing plants covered with their foliage, concealing its form, and giving it the appearance of a verdant arbour; an isolated and colossal column marked the station of the house of Mæcenas; further on rose some towers; as far as the eye extended there was a beautiful mingling of gardens and houses, and ruins, shadowed with cypress and pine trees; at the bottom the elevated summits of Monticelli, Montalbano, and San-Angelo in Capoccia, which form the limit of the Sabine territory, and of the Campagna of Rome, seem to crown the plain, through which the Anio winds, peaceably reposing, as it were, from the fatigues which it has experienced in the rocky passes of Tivoli.

The temple of *Tosse* is situated in the garden belonging to the canons of the cathedral; its form is circular, and it is in a good state of preservation; in fact, it is not known to what divinity it was consecrated, although popular tradition has dedicated it to the goddess who presided over *coughs*. It is certainly true that the ancients sometimes erected altars to malevolent deities, to propitiate them, and to protect themselves from their influence; Cicero mentions a temple consecrated to Fever; Pliny speaks of the temples of Misfortune and Idleness; perhaps, however, the etymology of this denomination may have arisen in another manner. The designation of families was frequently added to the names of divinities as *Juno-Claudia*, *Fortuna-Flavia*; may not this temple have been dedicated to some *Venus-Tossia*, or *Ceres-Tossia*? Fabretti mentions two monuments of a family of that name.

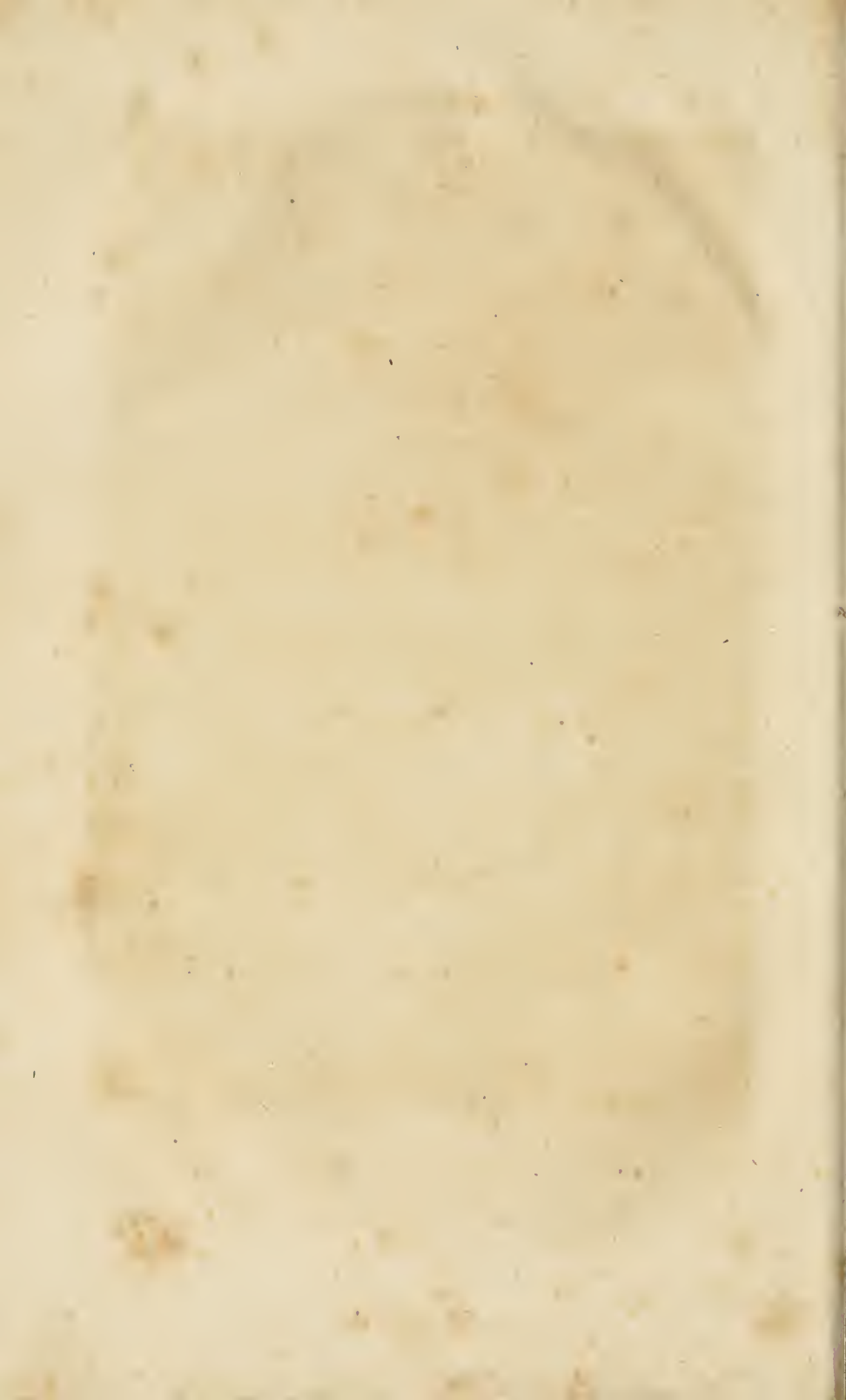
As we proceeded on our route, we traversed woods which shaded a soft green turf; we forded little brooks, or climbed small hills covered with myrtles, sage, and rosemary. The sun which falls direct on these unsheltered and uncultivated spots, almost burns them, rendering the odours of the plants still more strong, and drinking up their balsamic emanations, which rise like the incense of gratitude to the great Creator. I gave way to the beauty of the scene, and, plunged into contemplative thought, I made no answers but in monosyllables to my young guide; and he, on his side, withdrawing himself, instigated no doubt by the chaunting of the birds, began gaily to sing those beautiful airs which the people of this land so much delight in, and the melodious simplicity of which is truly charming. What is that natural taste which is found only in Italy, where every simple villager, every child that sings is accompanied immediately by the bye-standers with such taste and judgment? In joining their voices the same air is continued, not in the same tones, but with the melody of different parts. Whence does that tact arise, that nice and





*Scelte di don gas. strano*

SITE OF HORACE'S HOUSE.



delicate perception, which enables them to catch the most harmonious notes, and to reject every false tone? They know not the rules of music; they are ignorant of the lowest principles of composition, yet they form combinations which indicate the finest skill, and seem the effect of a sort of instinct.

Without experiencing the least fatigue from the length of the way, we arrived at the entrance of the ancient mansion of a powerful emperor. No triumphal arch, no succession of porticos were left—a simple and unornamented door-way, formed of two pilasters covered with plaster, was all that remained. As I entered the vast inclosure of the Villa Adriana, I found myself surrounded by heaps of ruins which astonished me by their immensity.

The proud retreat of Adrian, situated about three miles from Tibur, towards the south-west, occupied, in a line of nearly three miles, a chain of hills in the midst of a winding valley, bounded by rocks: it was protected towards the east by high mountains crowned with thick forests; and on the opposite side lay the numerous monuments strewed along the plain of Rome. In the distance the seven hills of the eternal city, covered with obelisks and temples, rose above the horizon, burning with the setting splendours of the sun. A nearer view of the villa discovered the edifices built on the summits of the hills, on their sides or at their base; some built on level ground, some raised on terraces, and some constructed under ground; there were porticos, gymnasiums, theatres, circuses, stadiums, temples, and houses mingled with gardens, bowers, and pieces of water. This vast territory contained such a quantity of monuments, that it bade defiance to the outrages of time and man.

Salust, Horace, and Seneca, complain with reason of the ruinous magnificence of the villas of their time; Adrian surpassed all his predecessors, and put the world under contribution for embellishments for his Tiburtine Villa. This emperor is said to have had a desire of constructing in this place, imitations of all the most celebrated edifices which he had admired in his travels, as the Lyceum, the Academy, and the Prytaneum of Athens. Nay, it was even said that a representation of the infernal kingdom and the Elysian fields was to be seen here. One cannot doubt the truth of history, when one beholds these monuments. Though explored a hundred times, and presenting no interest but to painters and architects, yet the immense space which is covered, the thickness and solidity of the walls, the precious objects, the remains of which crowd every step, the very considerable number of statues, bas-reliefs, and inscriptions, which have been discovered in this



place, and carried to Rome, to enrich the museums—all add to the idea which we have formed of the powerful magnificence and never-failing resources of the monarch-people.

The principal entrance into the villa looked towards the bridge of Lucano, and the Tiburtine road; a way, the remains of which are still seen, led to it: two piles of masonry, distant from each other 75 feet, mark the entrance—they rise on the border of the road, at the entrance of the modern enclosure. On entering, the most remarkable object which presents itself is a very high wall, which overlooks the Pæcile, a double portico of 700 feet in height, once ornamented in all probability with paintings, like that at Athens, and supported on each side by the wall we have mentioned. This building is so high, that it casts a shade at almost every period of the day. This wall was situated between two squares equally surrounded with porticoes; that on the south still preserves the form of a parallelogram, terminated at its extremities by flattened arches. In the centre of this vast court there rose some low walls, which formerly supported a fountain, if we may credit those who levelled the place, in order to plant it with vines.

It was in the Pæcile, and in a hall which yet exists, that Adrian used to assemble his literary friends, and where he used to amuse himself in listening to, or disputing with them, according to the Athenian custom. The *Bibliotheca*, or Library, was not far from the Pæcile—nothing remains of it but the wall, in which there are 25 niches.

On a neighbouring hill rises a magnificent theatre; fragments of 48 statues have been discovered here; the rising seats are still distinguishable, and the *proscenium* and some other parts are in good preservation: it is the same with the other ancient theatre, with the exception of those of Pompeii and Herculaneum, which are more complete.

Turning to the south, we see the remains of the porticoes which led to the baths; then we arrive at the Academy and the Temple of Apollo and the Muses, which was ornamented with columns of Parian marble; not far from this, in the place in which the wild-beasts were confined, there were discovered in the pontificate of Alexander VI. the statues of the nine muses, which now adorn the Royal Museum of Paris. The neighbouring ground is covered with the ruins of the buildings which formed the Academy, habitations mingled with gardens and fountains formed by conducting thither the waters of the Marcia and the Anio: from this point extends a portico, which led to that part of the villa called the Lyceum—

a building dedicated to philosophical studies, where a group of Pan and Syrinx was discovered.

After having traversed the foundation of an *exedrum* and of the baths, the traveller arrives at the *Canopus*, one of the most beautiful ornaments of the place; here part of the valley had been shaped so as to contain a vast sheet of water, where imitations of naval combats were represented: at one of the extremities lie the ruins of a temple in the form of a shell, which was dedicated to Neptune, who was called Canopus by the Egyptians. Here also the statue of a sea-horse, one of the attributes of that deity was discovered; and also a considerable quantity of figures of Egyptian divinities, which were conveyed to the Museum of the Vatican, and deposited in the hall called on that account Canopus. In proceeding towards the east the traveller enters another valley, which is supposed by antiquarians to have been fashioned into a model of the delicious bowers of Tempè and the Elysian fields, and in which was the entrance to the infernal regions.

It appears to me that the excavations ornamented with sculptures and paintings, and in which mysteries, so terrifying to the uninitiated, were celebrated, were formed from the quarries, whence the immense piles of materials used in the construction of this villa were drawn; the entrances are through three apertures, which, in the opinion of Pirro Ligorio, mark the avenues of the three-quarters of the world—Asia towards the East, Africa towards the west, and Europe towards the north: long corridors, forming a labyrinth, led to an immense cavern filled with water, where the thrones and tribunals of the infernal deities were seen. The *Crypto Porticus* was a grotto formed in the rock. (*See Plate IX.*)

Towards the south, and at the extremity of the villa, extends the rest of the *Prytaneum*; it was composed of vast piles of building, where the emperor lodged the sick soldiers, his ancient companions in arms. Here were the granaries, the cellars, and innumerable other magazines for all sorts of provisions. Both in the environs, and in the centre of the beautiful gardens, rose the monuments of the illustrious persons who died in the villa. Many cinerary urns have been discovered. With the exceptions above mentioned, the villa only presents a mass of ruins. In the time, indeed, of Pirro Ligorio, many other buildings were standing; this was about the year 1550.

I quitted these interesting scenes, and hastened towards Rome. On my return from the villa, I passed a crowd from which loud laughs proceeded, and cries of bravo. I enquired the reason, and found that they were engaged in the game

*al porco*, or of pigs. Popular amusements generally resemble one another, although they vary according to the country, and the manners and character of the inhabitants. There are some games which, though cruel and sanguinary, are tolerated only on account of the address and courage which they require. It is in the nature of man to prefer games in which some personal danger is mingled. But it is shameful for man to amuse himself with the sufferings of harmless animals, frequently of a timid and peaceable nature, in cold blood; and without danger to himself exciting them to fight and mutilate one another, and then enjoying their agony.

The game which I have just mentioned is of the latter species, though scarcely more ridiculous than cruel; and it is not without risk to those who engage in it. A pig is the subject and the victim of the entertainment. This animal is adorned with ribbands and painted with various colours, and a bell is hung round its neck. The object of the game is to pursue and catch him; and this is very difficult for the performers, since they can neither see nor walk. Each of them in fact, is tied up in a sack of thick sail cloth, which is tied together at the top, so as to protect the person inside from the effect of blows. Two apertures are left for the arms, which are left completely at liberty. Muffled up in this strange manner, the hunters are placed in a ring, at some distance from one another, and are armed with sticks, ready, when the pig is let loose, to commence the attack. As soon as the ringing of the bell betrays the situation of their prey, and warns them of its approach, they all begin to leap forwards, for, as they cannot walk, they are obliged to use this motion. The slightest obstacle, and the least shock, trip them up; much of the sport consists in their endeavours to overthrow one another. The terrified animal, scared by the cries of the crowd, runs awkwardly about, endeavouring to escape from its enemies. It flies from one and meets with another, running against him and knocking him down;—then it makes a new attempt to pierce the crowd of spectators, which drives it back into the circle, beneath the sticks of its pursuers: at the sound of the bell, the weapons again descend, frequently on the shoulders of the other combatants. The animal becomes the property of him who seizes or disables it. The conqueror generally invites his companions to feast on the fruits of his triumph.

In re-entering this city, two objects of great interest, and which form good proofs of the taste both of the ancients and moderns, the villas of Mæcenas and Este, (*See plate VIII.*) claim from the traveller a more than ordinary attention. It is necessary to call up every power of the judgment and imagination,



to form an accurate idea of the former. The latter, better preserved, is yet nothing more than the shadow, as it were, of what it was in the time when this family, now extinct, flourished—a family which has gained an immortal name in the verses of Ariosto. The long terraces, the elegant porticoes, the refreshing grottoes, are solitary and silent. The stillness of the gardens is only broken by the rustling of the leaves; and the light murmurs of the waters, which, formerly subjected to the tortures of art, rose in jets, or fell in cascades, upon beds of madreperle, of mother-of-pearl, and of shells. Now, abandoned to the beautiful wildness of nature, they wind through the unequal plain, or amidst the trees, to the beds which they have formed for themselves in the hollows of the valley. The luxury of Nature has replaced the haughty vanity of the former proprietors. Whilst the marbles are sinking in decay, the enormous cypresses which adorn the garden continue to increase, till their lofty heads seem searching in the clouds the bolt which has often blasted their form and their beauty. Time, the great vanquisher, has already begun to leave in these places the traces of his power, which are so cruelly visible in the villa of Mæcenas.

Mæcenas knew how to make a noble and generous use of life and riches. The Society which he enjoyed, composed of Augustus, of Horace, and of Virgil, and indeed of all the most celebrated men of his time, rendered his life truly pleasing to him. The beauty of the situation of this villa, the variety of vast and splendid edifices, the refined distribution of the interior apartments, and the objects of curiosity which were collected in this place, attracted hither all the luxurious inhabitants of Rome. The grandeur of style observable in these ruins, and their vastness, recal the memory of their former greatness, and excite sentiments of admiration for them, even in their present state of decay.

They were described by Pirro Ligorio, at a time when they existed in a more perfect state. But the many vicissitudes which this edifice, dedicated to delight, has suffered in the lapse of ages, have despoiled it of the most of its beauties. Scarcely a trace remains of the paintings, and the sculptured ornaments have all disappeared. How different now is this habitation from what it was when the minister and favourite of Augustus fled to this retreat, in search of that repose and slumber which so obstinately refused to shed its influence on his eye-lids. Yet the murmurs of the waters, which as they flowed, refreshed the delightful sojourn, and fell from various cascades; musicians placed at a certain distance from the bed-chamber, so that the harmonious sounds of instruments and

voices, bore only to the ear murmurs which invited to sleep; all the resources which riches can lavish on their master, could not calm the trouble of his soul and the inquietude of his spirit.

The very appearance of these ruins tells their ancient magnificence. They rose pile above pile in retreating grandeur, and the loftier buildings were reached by means of flights of steps ornamented with grottos, from whence flowed fountains of waters. The peculiar residence of Mæcenas, surrounded with innumerable porticoes and gardens, like a high tower, commanded a view of all the town of Tibur and its environs, and could easily be perceived by the inhabitants of Rome: and even at this day, when we see, rising from the green summits of the rocks which impend above the stream, two prodigious ranges of arcades, built in a noble and impressive style of architecture, we are struck with admiration of this edifice, one of the most extraordinary relics of an age fertile in the productions of genius and splendour.

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## LETTER VII.

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*St. Peter's—View of the Pontiff—History of Mosaic Painting—Villas of the Italians—their Gardens—the Villa Borghese.*

IT is impossible to enter the cathedral of St. Peter without experiencing a sentiment of respect which produces awe and silence. This is, in fact, the first and most celebrated temple in Christendom. It is the sanctuary of devotion, the scene of the most solemn ceremonies. As I slowly gazed on the details of this vast edifice, and as my thoughts were employed with equal surprize and admiration on the astonishing objects which environed me, my attention was attracted by a scene, most simple, yet most impressive, the lively memory of which brings it now before my eyes. I saw, slowly advancing in the midst of a crowd which fell prostrate at his feet, a venerable old man. His finely shaped head was covered with white locks, and kindness and calmness were expressed in his countenance. I beheld the floating of his long white robe, and, though devoid of every ornament, I recognized the sovereign Pontiff. The deepest silence reigned around him.—Advancing alone to the middle of the nave, he knelt down—and, prostrate on the marble pavement, he humiliated himself before the sanctuary, confounded and mingled with the other worshippers. I have

since seen him under a magnificent canopy, crowned with the triple tiara, and environed with all the pomp of sovereignty: but to me he appeared far more great when, lonely, bending over a tomb, and plunged in deep meditation, he prayed for the peace and safety of the human race. His humility elevated him in my eyes: he then appeared a worthy successor of St. Peter, a fit pastor for the Christian world—his lowly attitude inspired more respect in my bosom than if I had seen him officiating at the most gorgeous ceremonies.

A picture of another kind, yet no less interesting to me, now engaged my attention—the sublime representation of the transfiguration of Christ. I know not whether it was accident, or the consequence of the ingenious mode in which this Mosaic was placed,—but a sunbeam shed its light on the Glory, while the rest of the composition was in a soft and harmonious demitint. The appearance of this inimitable painting, for it must be called so; the sanctity of the place; the religious silence, succeeded by the swell of harmonious voices which rolled along the vaulted roofs; the whole scene ended so truly imposing, left such traces in my mind, that I doubt whether the sublime original\* could give rise to similar sensations.

Some observations on the art of Mosaic painting will not be impertinent in this place. This art, which consists in uniting small pieces of various coloured marbles, so as the surface may have the effect of a painting, was discovered by an artist, whose industry Pliny qualifies with the term of *importunum ingenium*. The invention is most probably due to the Persians, from whom it passed to the Assyrians, and thence to the Greeks; it was not practised at Rome till the later years of the republic, when works of this kind were introduced from Persia, Numidia, Phrygia, and Egypt, and raised amongst the Romans a desire of imitation. Accordingly, marbles were collected from various countries, and a school of Greek artists established at Rome. The art was at length gradually naturalized in that city, and was carried to great perfection under the emperor Adrian, who was much attached to it; and the relics of Mosaics, which have been found in our time in the villa of that emperor, do not belie the pompous descriptions which Statius has left us.

The art continued in great esteem during the two first ages of the empire; but under Septimus Severus, with the other arts, it also began to decline. Still, in Italy, they worked in Mosaic under Gallienus, Aurelian, and their successors. The Goths, who sometimes imitated the Romans in their protection of the fine arts, professed some esteem for Mosaic painting;

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\* This picture had been carried to Paris. The copy is in Mosaic work.



and Theodoric, when he became King of Italy, caused a pavement to be worked at Santa Maria, *in Cosmedin*, at Ravenna. The Goths seem to me to have been unreasonably accused of destroying the monuments of art: that destruction should be attributed to other causes; but a dissertation on this subject would detain me too long.

In the sixth century the working in Mosaic was much practised at Constantinople, and was patronized by Justinian. By the orders of that prince, the dome of St. Sophia was ornamented with paintings of this kind, which were rather distinguished for the selection and richness of the materials, than for the purity of the design. It was at this period that the custom of executing paintings and Mosaics on a gold ground was introduced, a custom continued to our days in the churches of the modern Greeks. From the seventh to the tenth century, the art of Mosaic painting was promoted by various pontiffs; but, at the latter period, this, with the other arts, suffered so much neglect, that the abbot of Monte Cassino, wishing to have some designs executed in it, was compelled to procure artists from Constantinople. From this period, few Mosaics were painted in Italy till the fourteenth century, when Venice became the true school of the art. Andrea Tafi, a Florentine, having been instructed by Apollonius, a Greek, established a school for Mosaic painting in Florence, in which Gaddo Gaddi, Vicino de Pisa, and many others were instructed.

This art was in great request at Rome, under the pontificate of Benedict XII.; and to the talents of Giotto, aided by Simone Memmi, and by Piero Cavallini, we owe the celebrated picture of the bark of St. Peter agitated by the waves. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, Ghirlandajo completed, at Florence, a magnificent Mosaic, composed of cubical pieces of stained glass, which procured him much fame. As design grew more perfect, the works in Mosaic became less stiff in their contour, and the colouring was better understood. Titian perfected the art, when he had the direction of the decoration of St. Mark's, by causing imitations in Mosaic of his own immortal paintings to be executed. Under Clement VIII. it was determined to ornament the church of St. Peter with paintings; and, in consequence of the humidity of the place, Mosaics were preferred; the ablest artists were engaged Cigoli, Passignano, Vanni, &c. It is impossible in this place to give a detailed account of these productions: it may be sufficient to say, that some of the finest works of Domenichino, Guercino, and Poussin, were imitated in the most durable materials. The Transfiguration, after Raffaele, executed by the orders Clement XII. is one of the most perfect specimens of the modern school of Mosaic painting.

We shall now give a succinct idea of the mechanical part of this art as it is practised at Rome. The fragments of marble, coloured glass, or stones, which are made use of, vary in size. They are square, triangular, or lozenge-shaped; or, rather, they take every angular form which allows of their suiting the purposes of the artist in the contour of design, and at the same time enables him to join them without leaving the least interval. There are various ways of shaping these fragments; and, after they are cut into prisms or cubes, they are disposed in order, according to the different shades of colour. The artist then selects as many of these as he imagines will furnish him with a day's work; and he prepares a ground of plaster, formed of chalk and marble powder mixed with gum-adragant and the white of eggs. The stucco thus prepared is spread very thick on the walls, where it remains fresh and moist, sometimes for three or four days; and it is occasionally moistened with damp linen. The artist chalks on this plaster the outline of his design after his sketch, then with a pair of fine pincers he takes the small squares of glass and inserts them in the stucco, arranging them one after another so as to give the lights and shades and the various tints. In this he follows the design which he has under his eye, taking care to leave no opening between the pieces, and placing them all equal and at the same height. At length, by continuing this process, and polishing the surface with very fine sand and water, the artist completes his labours.

As my object is peculiarly to recommend the application of Mosaic work to splendid and magnificent subjects of decoration, I shall only add, that the moderns appear to have surpassed the ancients in this art, at least in the immense proportion of some of their works. There is no ancient monument of this kind which can be compared in richness to the church of St. Peter, where twelve or fifteen of these large compositions which I have mentioned may be seen. The vast cupola and the lantern are also magnificently ornamented with Mosaics.

There is also another process, derived, no doubt, from the same idea of durability; the origin and history of which are curious and little known. I mean the *terra inetriata* and the *majolica*, which have given rise to the painting on enamel and porcelain, and perhaps also to the staining of glass. But enough at present of the arts.

Rome presents so many interesting objects to the traveller, that an age would be necessary to see and describe them. The Vatican alone would fill volumes. I find myself unable to dwell for a long time together on the same object. Notwithstanding winter, the country offers many charms; and the

are most delightful when, surrounded by hills whose summits are white with snows, we breathe all the sweetness of the spring-tide; and, though the verdure be less fresh than at that beautiful season, we scarce lack anything of the charms of the country.

Yet it was with regret that I turned from the magnificent galleries, even though it was to wander in the laurel shades of the *Villa Medici*, or under the verdant chesnut trees and pines of the *Borghese* gardens. These delicious spots where Nature and Art have united to produce beauty, are my delight.—There I read, I draw, and I meditate; and, although alone, I am never tired of my occupation.—There I never experience either the wild elevation of joy, nor the dejection of deep sorrow; but that peaceable contentment of soul, arising from the calmness of the passions, and the absence of worldly business, which permits me to give myself up to the sweet and tranquil pleasures which a liberal cultivation of the arts induces.

The name of *Villa*, which the French, by a periphrasis, translate *maison de plaisance*, awakens in the mind ideas of peace, grandeur, prosperity, and pleasure. In fact, these little palaces, built in picturesque situations, can only be inhabited with ease and security in nations where the country is peaceable and the towns flourishing. Thus amongst the ancient Greeks, who were always at war with one another, and perpetually menaced with foreign incursions, the husbandmen were forced to shut themselves up in the cities, seeking within their walls a shelter for their fortunes, their liberty, and their lives, and edifices of this kind were completely unknown. It was the same among the Romans, till the time of Augustus, when that powerful people had repelled the waves of war from their shores. Then the plain of Rome, the borders of Campania, and the margins of the lakes of Lombardy, became covered with those charming habitations which, for a part of the year, afforded a retreat to the illustrious Romans. This luxury was carried to such an excess, that the Ciceros, the Mæcenases, and the Plinies, could travel over almost the whole of Italy, from the capital to the confines of Apulia, without, as it were, quitting their own property; for, during the whole route, they rested at their own villas or houses, which supplied them and their suite, frequently very numerous, with every thing which was either necessary or agreeable. In fact, these journeys, where every thing which pride or luxury could require was found, were converted into parties of pleasure.

Amongst the moderns none but sovereigns can travel in this manner. One is surprised to think how a simple Roman knight surpassed in this respect some of the greatest monarchs of antiquity, and even many of the sovereigns of our own day.



The wars, of which Italy became the theatre, during the convulsions of the Lower Empire, soon swept away these delicious villas of which scarce anything but disfigured ruins remained; and it was not till the epoch of the restoration of the arts and of peace that great men began to imitate in the disposition of their villas the example of the ancients. In this the French were very late, and it was not till the age of Louis XIV. that we saw any royal edifices, or castles, worthy of the name.

The villas of the Italians have served as a model for all Europe. Celebrated by poets, and admired by travellers, they well deserve a faithful graphic representation: and yet to this day there is scarcely a single work which gives a tolerable idea of these edifices.

Disposed in the best manner for effect, the builders have taken advantage, with admirable address, of the nature of the situation, and the position in which frequently they have been obliged to build; their gardens, above all, have a fairy-like appearance which is rarely found elsewhere, and which results less from the wildness with which they affect to imitate nature, than from a sort of regularity which harmonises with the decorations and the architectural effect. The gardens of the Tuilleries perhaps convey the best idea of their Italian prototypes.

It may perhaps appear extraordinary, that, in a country which naturally presents such a variety of beautiful walks, the forms of regular gardens should have been adopted; but this surprise will probably cease when we reflect, that all these natural beauties are the property of every peasant who can feast his eyes on the variety of woods, and hills, and brooks, and cottages, and ruins, which form the elements of English gardening. But this prospect, which is so common in Italy, on that very account possesses no attractions for the great and the rich; they esteem it necessary that nature should present to their eyes a new, an imposing, and a singular appearance. Thus they plant in lines, and trail their trees in a thousand different forms; they imprison their streams in narrow channels, force them to spout into the air, and to fall down precipices in symmetric cascades.

In this the modern Italians only follow the example of their ancestors; the art was restored by the Medici, as favourable to the decoration of the brilliant fetes with which they wished to amuse their fellow-citizens; in their sumptuous gardens nature was subjected to the rules of art; the brilliant fictions of the poets were realised, and every sense, flattered and delighted, held the imagination in continued enchantment.

It may be objected, it is true, that all these effects are false and that nature here is entirely factitious; that the long wedge-shaped alleys, the forced fountains, the well-assorted flowers enclosed in regular compartments, and all these objects so symmetrically repeated, only fatigue by their length, and speak little to the mind, and still less to the heart; but, in fact, the only object is to amuse the senses, to excite astonishment and admiration, and to make a royal habitation harmonize with the pomp and splendour of a court; and this is besides the true mode of laying out a public garden, where people walk less for the sake of solitude, than for the purpose of meeting pleasing society, and where it is so frequently the object of every one to shine.

The citizen, to be sure, fatigued with town-pleasures, may convert his little garden to the English model; he may make mountains scarce comparable to American ant-hills; vallies a few feet long; and he may now and then pump a respectable stream which shall flow a full quarter of an hour.

The passionate lovers of the true beauties of nature, will pardon these observations on the contemptible imitations which outrage their model, and will prefer in many situations the monotonous uniformity of our old French gardens, to those which are laid out in what is called the English style; it is true, that very regular plantations are far from pleasing; the Italians have perceived this, and they have stopped at a point when the deformity becomes monstrous. It is a correct remark, that the gardens of Italy present all the variety and picturesque effect of modern gardens, without any of their monotony or puerile simplicity; they are planted regularly round the houses, and, by a skilfully managed progression as they recede, they mingle with the sylvan appearance of the country; they do not, as amongst us, endeavour to make a fine situation of a garden; but they make the garden in a fine situation; art follows nature, and does not strive to create it; even in the least thing, the traces of genius, the refinement of good taste, and the *decorum* of art, are perceptible in this country. Frequently we see architecture, sculpture, and painting, all directed by one mind, often executed by the same hand, concurring to produce a general effect, and by their perfect harmony a most delightful agreement of parts. In fact, these gardens give the best idea of the boasted villas of the ancients, and nothing probably better resembles the habitations of Lucullus, the gardens of Sallust, and the retreats of Cicero and of Pliny, than the *Ville Albani*, Panfili, Aldobrandini, and Borghese; the latter more especially, which is the constant boundary of my walks, well supplies the place

of the villa of Pompey the Great, which was situated in this place, and which that celebrated general bought in the year of Rome 692, under the name of his freedman Demetrius Liborius, with the produce of the riches which he had acquired in his wars with the Armenians, the Parthians, and the Assyrians, and in his triumph over Mithridates.

This vast piece of land, which extended over all Mount Pin-cius, contained large gardens of unequal ground, ornamented with fountains and other superb buildings: though now of less extent, it contains nearly as many objects of curiosity as formerly. The mode in which they are distributed is full of taste, and might serve for a model.

The inequality of the land is taken advantage of in order to produce the most extraordinary effects, one of which surprises the beholder the more as it is rarely met with; it is a lake suspended, as it were, on the summit of a mountain: the waters are carried there at a great expense, but then they give life to these beautiful gardens. They rush from the top of a rock filling the urns of many sculptured nymphs, and at last, flowing round a temple consecrated to Esculapius, this irregular lake is surrounded by magnificent trees, such as chesnut trees, laurels, weeping-willows, and also with fragrant shrubs, the trembling and dome-shaped foliage of which is reflected in the waters which it darkens.

During those beautiful nights, the calmness and freshness of which are so much prized in Italy, this temple and these cascades are sometimes illuminated in an ingenious and pleasing manner. Elegant boats shoot along the borders of the lake, or linger under the flowery bowers; bands of musicians, distributed here and there, make the scene echo with the sublime notes of Paesiello and of Cimosora, while select companies wander amid the enchanting arbours, or form themselves into parties for dancing.

These beautiful gardens in every part offer some object of interest; little edifices appropriated to various uses are scattered throughout—here rises a chapel in the middle of a quincunx; there extend the ruins of a Grecian temple surrounded with laurels; farther on there rose a vast Hippodrome, used for equestrian exercises and races. In a retired valley, the arid sides of which are covered with immense pines, an old embattled castle bursts upon the view, and herds of deer may be seen wandering along the sylvan shades; fragments of antiquity, statues, monuments, and bas-reliefs, which have not been fortunate enough to find a place in the palace, nor in the museum which has been recently constructed, are tastefully distributed along the walls, along the paths, and in the arbours.



The Princes of Italy do indeed thus make a noble use of their riches; in other respects they live in a very simple manner, and they seem only to exist for the arts; in labouring for them they effectually extend the glory of their country, and contribute to render it worthy the homage of men of taste of every country.

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## LETTER VIII.

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*Journey from Rome to Florence—Remarks on the two cities—  
The Carnival—The Stanza and Cazina.*

MY journey was so rapid from Rome to Florence, that I shall not permit myself to describe a country which I travelled over without stopping; yet, in spite of the speed with which I travelled, I could not help remarking the great contrast between the states of the church, and the grand duchy of Tuscany: it appeared to me so striking, that I could scarcely believe it was the effect of prejudice.

When two states are separated by an arm of the sea, by a river or by a chain of mountains, the communication between the inhabitants becomes difficult, and a distinction in manners and character and habits ensues; but here the line of demarcation is in fact only ideal: the nature of the land is indeed the same, but every thing else, even to the physiognomy of the people, is different. The Romans have a taciturn and almost savage air among the lower orders; I frequently remarked figures, which always enveloped in their mantles, and eyeing you with a scrutinizing look, appeared as if they were meditating some act of vengeance, and we might feel uneasy if we were not aware that these people all this time are absolutely thinking of nothing, and only in their own way enjoying their *benedetto far niente*; this, when continued, is undoubtedly a state of ennui, and gives to their features an expression which becomes frightful from its immobility.

The plains of Rome, and here there is no illusion, are badly cultivated; the villages are miserable, and the country, almost

a desert, presents moors and heaths over which the traveller passes with reluctance. The towns, filled with monks rather than with citizens, seem the asylum of sloth. Such is the picture which all this territory, even to its frontier, presents! But on entering the bounds of Tuscany every thing changes, even to the countenances of the inhabitants, which seem full of contentment and benevolence. Their rural cottages, adapted to all the necessities of agriculture, are well built; their fields, skilfully cultivated, bear good crops; for Nature, avaricious only towards the idle, always recompenses industry and labour with treasures, the sources of prosperity and pleasure. I shall pursue no farther a comparison which may be injurious, and, perhaps, unjust, to one of these governments. I content myself with pointing out the difference without seeking for the cause. Perhaps I have overcharged the painting, but careful observation will be found to fortify my opinion.

It is very rare at Rome to find a meeting of a few individuals which is not disturbed by a quarrel, often terminating with the *coltellate*.

At Florence, on the contrary, on occasion of their many ceremonies and public fêtes, frequently the largest crowds assemble peaceably: on the festival of the Assumption, especially, the inhabitants of Florence and its environs assemble early in the morning in the vast and delicious walks of the Casinos, on the borders of the Arno. There all ranks are mingled and confounded by pleasure: the day is passed in joy; the air resounds with songs, and with the sounds of the musical instruments which animate the steps of the dancers; and in the shade of the pines and chesnut-trees small parties seat themselves on the turf to enjoy a rural repast.

The festival frequently extends far into the night, but there is not a single instance of a quarrel attended with bloodshed; and yet there are more than twenty thousand persons collected and enclosed in one place:—this made me love the Tuscans.

Rome and Florence present in their appearance the same contrast which we have remarked between the two states, and they are in many respects opposed to each other.

At Rome, the mingling of modern edifices with the ruins of those of the republic of the Cæsars forms an interesting picture for the artist and the historian: yet this confusion of all the styles of architecture takes away from the modern city, which is grafted as it were on the ancient town, every peculiar and national character. On the contrary, the capital of Tuscany, possessing no antique monuments, presents the appearance of a town constructed at the same epoch and in the same style. That of the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries still predominates,

and if the Florentine costume did not so much resemble our own we might think we were still living in the noble age of the Medici. The ancient monuments of Rome do not produce this illusion: few of them are preserved entire, and those which are, are converted to modern uses, which has despoiled of their enchantment these venerable relics.

The magnificent portal of the Pantheon would present to the mind the temple consecrated by Agrippa, were it not for the modern clocks which shew it is converted into a church. Its interior more especially has preserved nothing of its ancient decoration; and the contrast on entering it is the same which we meet with in buildings the exterior of which displays rustic simplicity, while within we find saloons ornamented with all that luxury can bestow.

The arches and triumphal columns have very little effect, surrounded as they are with miserable houses, or buildings in a modern and frequently extravagant taste: the other remains of antiquity offer nothing but foundations or naked walls. The imagination with difficulty views them in their pristine state. In order effectually to recal the feeling of antiquity, nothing should remind you of the present; and these reveries, produced by the enthusiasm so common to artists, ought to enjoy retirement and solitude. The appearance of the Roman ruins rarely procured me this delight, which I felt in all its plenitude as I traversed the deserted streets of Pompeii.

If in Rome the mixture of ancient and modern recollections repels the imagination, which only acts to be deceived, this is by no means the case at Florence. It is true the epoch which is there recalled is neither so ancient nor so interesting,—but the mind recurs with less effort to the age of the Medici than to that of Augustus.

On approaching Florence the eye discovers the same walls, flanked with picturesque towers, which surrounded the city in the fifteenth century, and against which the Pisans and the Siennese so frequently spent their efforts in vain. All the monuments which rise so proudly, those immense domes, the embattled palaces, which resemble fortified castles, the chapels enriched with pious offerings, the handsome streets paved in the ancient style, the flowers which hang in festoons from one palace to another, which crown the walls and the summit of the towers, seeming by their abundance to have given its name to the city, all recal the age when Florence, free, or voluntarily submitting herself to the rule of her illustrious children the Medici, dealt out to the rest of Italy science, politeness, taste, and magnificence.

Let us enter the ancient public square;—let us survey this



palace, loaded with escutcheons of old families;—let us rest under this *logge*, ornamented like the square with the works of Donatello, of Michael Angelo, and of Giovanni di Bologna: but the imagination cannot conjure up the glorious men of that time, who in this place, presided by their magistrates, distributing rewards to merit, decreeing peace or war, and ruling the affairs of the state.

The pleasures of the carnival broke in upon my researches into the monuments of Florence; but it will furnish me with some shades of habits and manners which I should not have been able to catch at any other season. It really seems that one forms a worse judgment (though the assertion may seem paradoxical) of the human character in society when the true sentiments of the mind are dissembled under false colours, than when under the mask of folly they make themselves amends for the habitual restraint in which the rules of society hold them, well assured that they are less likely to be recognised in proportion as they act with the freedom of unassumed nature.

In some of the towns of Italy the period of the carnival is a time of riot and sanguinary quarrels. It is here characterised by a bustling joy and lively pleasure, yet tempered by the politeness and natural suavity of the inhabitants. In these public festivals the population for twenty leagues round are collected without the least trouble or accident. The carnival frequently lasts the whole season, that is, the three winter months. This is the only period of the year when the theatres are open at Rome. But at Florence two of them do not close all the year, those of *Pergola* and *Cocomero*. During the carnival others are opened, in which a variety of pieces are performed. Besides this the squares and the streets are filled with rope-dancers and pantomimic performers of every kind, and winter wears away in a round of amusements in which all partake.

I shall not give a long list of all the particulars which compose the character of this carnival, as it resembles in many respects similar festivals in other cities. I shall only relate what seemed to me peculiar to Florence; the description of one day alone will be sufficient.

The carnival opens with the procession of the *Befana*, in the midst of torches and with the noise of horns and drums mingling with the noisy gaiety of the people. In the midst appears a ludicrous colossal figure representing a woman, or rather a sorceress, cloathed in flowing garments. The movements of the figure are directed by a man who is not seen

himself. As it traverses the streets it turns on every side to terrify the children, which it attacks even in the second story. The enormous phantom called the *Befana* is all the year round the bug-bear of the young Florentines, who, if they behave ill, are threatened with its presence. When they have traversed the city they stop on the bridge and throw the image into the water amid the cries and imprecations of the multitude.

The nurses of Florence also call *Befana*, or *Beffania*, those good or evil fairies which, according to them, enter the houses by the chimney on the night of this festival. And children suspend their cloaths above the hearths that the fairies may fill their pockets with cakes in proportion as they have behaved themselves well or ill.

I shall not endeavour to account for the procession of the *Befana* from the saturnalia, or any other ancient pagan rite. I am rather of opinion with Manni, that it is a relic of the representation of the ancient mysteries, and is intended to commemorate the gifts of the magi: the black and ugly figures represent the magi, and the presents which the children expect to receive commemorate those offered to the Holy Family. Whatever the true explanation may be, as soon as the *Befana* announces the opening of the carnival every person in good circumstances is never seen abroad but in his *bauto*, or domino, which is a kind of black cloak. This mantle, which crosses in front, conceals all the other garments, and serves equally well for the promenade, for company, for the *stanza*, or for the theatre. The women wear a kind of high black bonnet, shaded with plumes of the same colour: this is equally the head-dress of all the females. Exercise, fresh air, and pleasure animate their complexion and their eyes; and, mingled together in this uniform dress, they appear still more striking. During the days of the festival gaiety is pushed almost to excess, and few persons can preserve a solemn or an indifferent countenance.

The men wear a hat, clasped up in front and ornamented with plumes. Though ordinarily they only wear a small white mask fastened to the loop of their hats, or a pasteboard nose, yet they are considered as disguised, and they pass before their most intimate acquaintance without noticing them, and even without the air of knowing them. They in return preserve an equal distance, and thus both sides enjoy the greatest liberty.

How well would this fashion suit some people in society! They might then pass their superiors without respect, their benefactors without any mark of gratitude, their creditors

without being dunned, and their mistresses without agitation!

Towards noon the fashionables assemble at the *Uffizi*, an arcade under the celebrated gallery. Here witty repartees are exchanged, pleasantries cross one another, and bon mots circulate. Laughter communicates itself like an infection, and joy becomes universal. And, in the midst of the confused murmurs and rapid movements the spirit of intrigue is not idle, but assignations are made for an evening meeting at the *Corso*, in the square of *Santa Croce*, and thence for a visit to the theatre or the ball-room.

The Florentines, like the inhabitants of all southern countries, are great mimics; they can do what they will with their figures and countenances; and frequently, by a mere change of dress, they disguise themselves wonderfully, though their figure is seen. A young man disguised himself and walked for many days in the most frequented streets without a single person of his acquaintance recognising him. He dressed himself as an Abbè, in a little mantle; his hair, which was black, and had been usually combed high on the forehead, was curled, combed back over the head, tied in a knot behind, and powdered. Naturally pale, he rouged himself carefully, and, to conceal the thinness of his cheeks, he put a ball of ivory on each side of his mouth. In this state he gravely met his acquaintance, stopped before them, and boldly eyed them, while they supposed that this grave personage (for the balls of ivory prevented him from laughing) was an absolute stranger.

Sometimes, in addition to this little mask, a strange-shaped nose is added, which forms a strong contrast with the other features. Some masks are made from wax moulded on the human face, and afterwards tinted by portrait-painters so as to represent well-known faces, while the wearer imitates the dress, countenance, gestures, and even tone of voice of the original, in a manner which almost deceives you.

Other masquerades imitate the costume of the ancient statues; thus we saw the Capitoline Juno walking arm in arm with Silenus, and Diana entering with the Apollo Belvidere.

The square of *Santa Croce*, however, is the great rendezvous of the masks. Its length, and the beauty of the palaces which surround it, fit it for the theatre of the festivals which are given in it, and which were formerly more frequent. Here were tiltings, and tourneys, and races, and lastly games at foot-ball. We have descriptions of many of these festivals; and, amongst others, of a magnificent masquerade given by Cosmo I. in the carnival of 1565: the carnival of 1615 has been engraved by Callot, and many others have exercised the graver of *La Bella*. The taste for these amusements was so great that during the



reign of Ferdinand II. and in the space of five months, six fêtes of different kinds were given, each more magnificent than the preceding.

The square of Santa Croce is surrounded with a boundary of chains, which leave sufficient space for the passage of carriages before the houses. On certain occasions amphitheatres are raised, round which also carriages can drive. The square was thus laid out in 1738 for the last festival of the *Calzio* or foot-ball, which has been engraved by Gioseppe Zocchi. This print gives a good idea of the masquerades of Florence. Besides the harlequins and punchinellos, which the French have in such numbers, the other characters are very various and well kept up.

All ranks, without exception, are turned into ridicule. A carriage filled with porters has a judge dressed in a long robe and large wig, for a coachman. A physician is mounted on a lean ass, with panniers and cages filled with cats, and carrying a long staff, from which some large dead rats are suspended, while a scroll on the top of it bears the words *Remedi da topi*, 'antidotes against rats:' to these may be added doctors with asses' heads, &c. The spectators themselves form a spectacle; the windows of the houses, and the balconies of the palaces, are all ornamented with rich tapestry, and graced with brilliant company. The people cover the tiles of the houses, and on these aerial theatres engage in games, from which Italian confidence and address take away all danger, and which afford a very diverting appearance.

The spectacle which we ourselves saw was very agreeable. The carriages, which throng the road, give great brilliancy to the scene; they are filled with masks who answer the joy and acclamations of the multitude by throwing them cakes and *confetti*, and by sprinkling showers of perfumed water from little syringes towards the spectators who line the windows and the balconies: some of the carriages contain musicians, and others are in the shape of triumphal cars, ornamented with different symbols.

I shall only mention one of these masquerades, where luxury was united to good taste, and the contrivance appeared to me new and ingenious: the car, drawn by twelve beautiful horses richly caparisoned, represented Olympus ornamented with foliage, and on which stood the principal heathen deities, surrounded by nymphs and rural gods, and a numerous orchestra. Jupiter occupied the summit of the mountain, seated on the extended wings of an eagle, and enveloped with clouds, whilst Apollo and the Muses were singing and reciting some sonnets, copies of which were thrown amongst the crowd, and

in the midst of the deafening noise of the musical instruments Jupiter was perceived to be agitated on his throne of clouds. He shortly leaves the summit of the mountain, rises majestically in the air, and sails along amid the applause of the wondering multitude, on whom he lances his artificial thunder, which, as it falls, changes into serpents; he still ascends, and as the last rays of the sun shine upon him he vanishes from the eyes of the enchanted crowd, who load with prolonged applause the contrivers of a spectacle as splendid as it is ingenious.

The inhabitants of Olympus did not disdain to mingle in the evening with simple mortals, and to appear at a masked ball which was given at the theatre of *la Pergola*; where we had the pleasure of finding ourselves in the company of the muses, who, forgetting the sanctity of their former existence, gave themselves up to pleasure and joy. Here we beheld the sage Lucina transformed into the youngest of the graces, Venus here quitted the mask of Minerva, though still as wise as before, while Juno tempered the majesty of heaven's queen with sweetness and affability.

The assembly of the *Stanze* was one of the most agreeable for select company; though none but masks were admitted, the door-keeper suffered none to pass but whom he knew: the sagacity of this man was wonderful—though you disguised your voice, and altered your walk, the door-keeper instinctively apprised, as it were, of the approach of an intruder, suffered you to proceed no further. This tact, this nice discrimination, though I believe it is perfectly mechanical, and common to many individuals in Italy, was one of the things which particularly excited my attention; this rare faculty, the mark of a more perfect organization, explains the facility with which the Italians execute all their undertakings—a facility which astonishes other nations, amongst whom such works are only the result of time, study, and reflexion.

The denomination of *stanze* or saloons, is applied to an establishment formed by the middle ranks of the city, in opposition to the *cazina* of the nobility; the latter, indeed, only comprises a small number of the community, and the nobles frequently abandon it for the *stanze* of the citizens, where more freedom and gaiety reign than in their own circle, over which, it is said, the pretensions of etiquette throw a coldness and constraint; the founders of the *stanze* bear all the expense, and admit such persons as are presented to them; here, for conversation, there are various rooms, which are filled with good company; here are news-rooms, billiard-rooms, ball-rooms, and also a garden; in short, nothing is wanting to render the place agreeable; the evening flies in a

circle of varied and decent amusements; the building communicates with one of the theatres, so you may walk thither under the arcade and hear a song, return and eat an ice, join in conversation, or figure in a dance.

This establishment, where manners are respected, and where fashion reigns, supplies the place of our Athenæums, and other places of public amusement; every stranger of respectability is received with distinction: thus means are discovered, both instructive and amusing, of employing the long evenings of winter.

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## LETTER IX.

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### *The Palazzo Pitti—The Gallery of Florence.*

THE celebrated gallery of Florence is commonly the first object which attracts the attention of strangers, and this is too frequently all they see of the city: it seems that all their interest is concentrated in this museum; but ere they have well examined it, the colossal idea of Rome crosses their minds, and they hasten thither as the object of their desire, observing few of the objects of curiosity on their route.

I have paid considerable attention, during my stay here, to the subject of Tuscan architecture, and to the exterior character of the principal monuments of Florence; in this study I was much favoured by the beauty of the season which is here called winter, and which from the softness of the temperature would be esteemed summer in other countries; in fact, till February the weather has been constantly serene, and the cold so little perceptible, that I have not omitted my usual custom of sketching in the open air; sometimes, indeed, the heat of the sun has been so great, that I have been compelled to shelter myself beneath the foliage of the ever-green trees, which give a false yet pleasing appearance of spring to the landscape.

I have been very much delighted with the delicious gardens of Boboli, which are situated on the hill commanding the Palazzo Pitti, the usual residence of the Grand Dukes.

The palace is connected with the gardens by means of a large sort of amphitheatre, in the middle of which rises an obelisk of Egyptian granite; this amphitheatre is composed of white marble, and the steps are supported by balustrades, and surmounted by niches containing statues and vases, which are finely relieved by the dark back-ground of ever-green



verdure. The gardens, planted under the directions of Tribolo, and of the ingenious Buontalenti, are ornamented with monuments of architecture and sculpture, distributed by Vasari and Giovanni di Bologna. The distribution of the gardens into various terraces, which are gained by flights of steps, offers a fine contrast of lines, and different points of views of great richness.

As yet we have had neither ice nor snow, and I have not yet felt melancholy at the sight of those sombre clouds, which shade the face of heaven for so considerable a period of the year in the north of France; we have yet no need of fires, and in the house in which I live, as indeed in all the others in the city, the kitchen chimney is the only one. It is only within these few years, that one or two others have been added in the Duke's palace, less from necessity than from curiosity. If at any time they feel cold they use a brazier of copper, sometimes of silver, in which they burn charcoal prepared from the wood of the olive tree, the fumes from which are not considered prejudicial. This brazier is called *veggio*, and they sometimes carry it with them when they walk abroad, though at most the cold is not two degrees below the freezing point.

At last the bad season has commenced, and it has terminated, as is frequently the case, with heavy showers, which have lasted without intermission for three weeks.

We do not see here as in the other towns of Italy, porticoes or covered galleries along the houses; but the inconvenience of sudden showers is guarded against by providing in various quarters of the town open *logge*: you may also prevent yourself being wet if you walk close to the houses, as you are protected by the projecting roofs, which are thus constructed to protect the front of the building from showers, and to ward off the rays of the sun. The streets, however, have one great advantage, being paved with large and well joined flags, so that the rain runs easily off them, and they are dry again in half an hour.

I have employed all the time the rainy season continued, in an examination of the celebrated gallery of Florence; as I surveyed it my admiration scarce knew any bounds, and I felt penetrated with veneration and gratitude towards the family of the Medici, who first set the example of such a noble employment of power and riches.

The arts always follow the fortune of empires: born at the same time, they experience the same vicissitudes, and their progress is equally regulated by circumstances. Flourishing in the bosom of peace, their flowers have sometimes been

blasted by political storms, or have withered under the influence of bad taste or of court corruption. They only bear their true fruit in a time of public prosperity, and under the protection of a wise and pacific government. What has chiefly contributed to expand the taste, and to promote the study of the arts, has been the establishment of museums, where the great works of ancient and modern times are collected. The Gallery of Florence, without doubt the most celebrated of all, merits a particular description; and, at the same time, I shall endeavour to give a sketch of its origin, of the vicissitudes which it has experienced, and of the successive additions which have been made to it.

The ancients, like the moderns, were much attached to the collecting of curiosities, and the remains of antiquity. Both in Greece and Rome they ornamented in this manner their porticoes, their temples, their schools, their libraries, and even their baths. But this attachment to objects of art was unknown to other nations, which possessed neither knowledge, taste, nor riches; and it was extinguished even in Italy during the long ages of barbarism.

It was the Medici, in the fifteenth century, when their family possessed no other influence but that of virtue and opulence, who awakened the genius, and afforded protection to the arts of peace. And, after they filled the throne of Tuscany, they contributed all in their power to the regeneration of Letters and Arts, and had the glory of giving their name to this memorable epoch. Cosmo the Elder, named by a decree, and still more by the voice of public gratitude, the Father of his Country, extended his paternal care to scholars and artists.

The sons of Cosmo, educated in the midst of a polished court, imbibed there a taste for study, and transmitted it to their descendants, and even to their people.

Giovanni de Medici encouraged these pursuits by his example, but a premature death carried him off. Piero de Medici, the second son of Cosmo, though under adverse circumstances, threw some lustre on the arts, and encouraged them by his liberality.

But it was Lorenzo, called the Magnificent, who opened, in his garden near the church of St. Mark, that famous school which had such a powerful effect on the re-establishment of the arts. He filled this place with a variety of specimens of both ancient and modern art; so that the *logge*, the alleys, and the halls, were ornamented with statues, paintings, designs, cartoons, and models,—the productions of the ablest masters, as Donatello, Brunelleschi, Masaccio, Paulo Ucello, Fra Gio Angelico, Filippo Lippi, &c. This school was open to all the young painters, sculptors, and architects.

At the same periods the museums *Estense* and *Gonzaga* were established. Nevertheless, the Medicean collection was still the most useful and complete. After the death of Lorenzo, his son, Leo X. extended great encouragement to literature and the arts; but the property of his brother Piero became the prey of his ungrateful fellow citizens. I shall not detail the disgrace and flight of the latter.—He left behind him the greatest part of his property.—His palace was sacked, and three thousand medals of gold and silver, without mentioning those of brass, which were probably equally curious—the vases of agate—the beautiful cameos—and a crowd of other curiosities, were stolen and dispersed.

Notwithstanding this misfortune, a servant of the Medici, who remained faithful to his trust, preserved, at the peril of his life, the precious objects which had been confided to his care. This man was the father of the celebrated Baccio Bandinello. But, at length, forced to fly, he buried the cameos, the antique figures of bronze, and the other riches; and this proof of fidelity did not remain without recompense when his patrons returned.

After the assassination of Alessandro de Medici by Lorenzo, one of the same family, the houses both of the victim and murderer were pillaged. They contained a great number of Greek and Latin MSS., statues of marble and bronze, and other valuable articles. The animosity of the people was such, that these palaces were completely razed; and the open spot, on which they formerly stood, was called the Traitors' Street.

Cosmo I. Grand Duke of Tuscany, collected the scattered relics of this once precious collection, and rapidly augmented it by commanding a strict search to be made throughout his territories for the monuments of antiquity, and at the same time increasing it by the acquisition of many private cabinets.

The success of these researches was considerable. At Arezzo, the celebrated inscription of Appius Claudius was discovered; and a little time afterwards, the Chimera, of bronze, a most singular and curious object. In the ruins of a temple, a Pallas of bronze was found, of beautiful workmanship. Cosmo was rejoiced at these discoveries, and with the fruits of them ornamented his cabinet in the Palazzo Vecchio; but, having purchased the Palazzo Pitti, he made it the place of his abode, and transferred thither this collection, to which he made incessant additions.

At this time many individuals, desirous of gaining the good graces of the sovereign, or induced by a disinterested love of the arts, and desirous of contributing to their progress, enriched



the Museum of Florence with many valuable articles, ancient and modern.

It was this prince who first conceived the idea of the Gallery which now contains the Museum Florentinum, and which has been carried to such a degree of magnificence by his successors. This vast edifice owes its origin to a design of uniting the ancient palace of the Republic to the Palazzo Pitti. Vasari executed this beautiful and useful work. The corridor, which passes over a bridge and through a part of the city, leading from the old palace to the habitation of the sovereign, was built in 1564, in the space of five months.

But this gallery became insufficient to contain all the objects of art which increased so rapidly. The Grand Duke Francis continued the labours of his predecessor; and, on the scite of some of the neighbouring houses, he added to the gallery some magnificent halls. The ceiling of one of these halls was covered with mother-of-pearl. And yet this cabinet is more ornamented by the beautiful objects it contains.

The Grand Duke Francis considerably augmented the collection of medals, and added all the antiques he could procure.

In 1552 he received twenty-six marble statues, which had been in the Vatican; but which that scrupulous pontiff, Pius V. dismissed, from a principle of religion; but not wishing them to be transferred into ecclesiastical hands, he had refused them to Ferdinando de Medici, on account of his being a cardinal. Amongst these statues were the seven muses, without the least traces of any part of the figures having been restored.

The Cardinal Ferdinando, the brother of the Grand Duke, had got possession at Rome of the villa and gardens of the Medici. Here a second Museum was established, which was fated one day to increase the richness of that of Florence. It is sufficient to mention the Venus de Medici, and the statues of Niobe and her children, to appreciate the value of this collection. In 1569 the two brothers divided between them the collection of the bishop of Pavia, consisting of fifty-nine statues.

Cosmo II. who had bad health, did not contribute much to the embellishment of this gallery. But, in the long reign of his successor Ferdinando II. many additions were made to it. The Cardinal Leopold, the brother of Ferdinando, formed a rich and numerous collection of pictures and sketches, which, to their beauty, added the merit of antiquity. They extended as far back as the restoration of the arts and the time of the Greek painters. The cardinal also possessed a collection of medals, cameos, &c. Cosmo III. added many pictures to the museum.

The Genius of the house of Medici, ere totally extinguished, seemed to wish to establish its rights to the gratitude of men

by some durable monument. Giovanni Gastone, the last scion of this illustrious family, commenced the magnificent description of this gallery, which is known by the name of the Museum Florentinum.

The new sovereigns of Tuscany, princes of the house of Lorraine, contributed to the embellishment and completion of this admirable collection. In the year 1762, however, it was on the point of being totally destroyed by a fire, which burst out with great violence. It lasted many hours, extending its ravages into the western corridor, and consuming a considerable part of the building. The fire arose in a chimney which had been imprudently constructed over the *logge de Lanzi*; and it was fortunate that the fire commenced at this extremity, where there were fewer valuable articles than on the other side; but it was extinguished with the loss of only a few of these precious objects.

Under the government of the Archduke Pietro Leopoldo, the legislator and reformer of Tuscany, the Gallery of Florence assumed a new appearance. The great fault of the gallery was a want of classification. Under his directions, many more halls were built, and a new flight of steps to ascend to them; and he added to the museum the most precious ornaments of the other palaces. He likewise sent to Rome for the statues from the Villa Medici, and more especially for those of Niobe and her children. By his exertions every class of objects had their distinct place, they were found without trouble, and classed so as to satisfy all tastes. He was rigorous in his selection, and admitted nothing that was not worthy of being preserved. The prince himself watched over the execution of his projects, and animated the workmen by his presence. One knows not which most to admire,—the grandeur of the enterprize, or the celerity of the execution. In 1780, in the space of one year, new buildings were added, and divided into halls; while, by this means, the communication was rendered more easy, and they were ornamented with stuccoes, gilding, paintings, and marbles; the tapestry and other drapery was renewed; the statues and pictures were placed in other situations, cleaned, or restored; whilst every thing was ranged according to the system of a library, where every volume has its own separate and distinct place. And this metamorphosis was executed in so rapid a manner, that travellers, ere they had completed the tour of Italy, as they repassed through Florence, thought they beheld a new gallery, and were full of admiration at a change which almost appeared magical.

## LETTER X.

*Festival of May—Arrive at Fiesole—Its History—Its Antiquities.*

THE traces of winter have disappeared in the space of a few days, and as if by the power of magic the balmy breath of Favonius has dissipated the frost, and changed all at once the aspect of the country; vegetation shews itself, the sap begins to rise in the trees, and the ground is covered with spontaneous verdure.

It is now time for me to quit the city, and commence my picturesque excursions—it becomes my pleasure, my care, and my duty, to assist in the awakening of nature.

I passed the gate of Santa-croce, and the mills and fall of the Arno, and I wandered slowly along the shady banks of the river. What a fresh and beautiful situation! Through the bowers of fruit-bearing trees and the boughs of lilacs, I perceived the waters sparkling against the banks, or rolling peaceably amongst the flexible branches of the osiers, which bent over the current. Farther on, on a hill covered with vines, rose some elegant *casinos*, which broke the blue line of the rocks of Fiesole, crowned with their Tuscan walls, remarkable for the lofty tower which serves as a belfry for the cathedral; nearer me the fields, divided by rows of reeds, presented an appearance of varied cultivation; I could not perceive any one at work, and I met none but villagers clothed in their gayest habits, who seemed more intent on their pleasures than their rustic labours.

At last I arrived at a farm-house; a young tree had just been planted before the door; knots of ribbands and little fillets of tinsel, were fluttering in the air, suspended from the branches, and sparkling through the leaves; every bough bore some ornament, and a crown of flowers shaded the window of the house. The air was echoing with the strains of a serenade, when the casement which served as a door opened, and three beautiful girls, fresh as the season, and neatly dressed, laughingly made their appearance to greet their lovers.

This pastoral scene reminded me that it was May-day, *Calendi-maggio*, a festal day in the spring of life, and at the name of which the heart throbs, even amid the coldness of age. In the gaiety and liveliness of this rustic sport the



youth of both sexes form a chain-dance around the May-pole ; they pursue each other with rapid and well-timed steps, whilst their relatives prepare a feast in some shady spot.

As soon as they saw me the master of the house advanced, and with an unembarrassed air invited me to partake of their rural repast. I hesitated ; my host's youngest daughter observed me, and separating herself from the group of dancers, she gave me her hand. It was impossible to resist the simplicity of this action ; I yielded ; she led me towards her companions, and the chain, in which I now formed a link, was recommenced with double joy and vivacity.

At the *Calendi-maggio*, rustic improvisators, dressed in a fantastic style, recite tales and legends for the amusement of their audience—I heard the history of *Ferragosto* ; the songs, which are composed on this occasion, are called *Maggeolate* ; and the tree, whose branches, adorned as I have mentioned, overshadow the windows of the young maidens, is called *maio*. The festival, which is only preserved in the country, has given place in town, to concerts, dances, and entertainments, which last several days. There are numberless *maggiolate*, composed by a crowd of authors, and even by Lorenzo the Magnificent.

As I proceeded I perceived before me the city of Fiesole, situated on the table-land of the mountain, and between the two swellings of the hills ; I saw its public square, its ancient cathedral, the more modern buildings of the archiepiscopal palace and the Academy ; lower down a road, the windings of which follow the bend of the hill, leads along the rocks which supported the ancient Etruscan fortress, where we now behold the church, the convent, and the vast garden of the monks of the order of St. Francis.

On the side opposite the plain of Florence the gazer's eye rests on the deep but elevated pass, through which the boiling waters of the Mugnone forces its way through a channel of rock and marble ; the rapid declivity causes no apprehension of danger, for its force spends itself on its own steep banks : evergreen woods clothe these mountains, which join the chain of the Apennine Alps, which display in the distance their summits capped with snow.

The most interesting prospects is that which includes the principal remains of Fiesole. This view appeared to me so beautiful, that, wishing to give my entertainers a proof of my gratitude for their kindness, I resolved to adorn the room with paintings in distemper, of which this view formed the most conspicuous part. There may seem a little vanity in mentioning this fact in my letters, but I possessed so few occasions of

exercising my pencil on a large scale, that this was really an epoch in my pictorial career.

On the hills of Fiesole I beheld the beautiful skies of Italy in all their purity, and there I experienced the plenitude of those sweet and vivid emotions, which the artist enjoys when youth and inspiration, and the desire of fame are his.

Mention is made, by the ancient authors, of Fiesole, but its ruins afford no means of judging of what it formerly was—temples, palaces, theatres are all swept away; even the tombs are violated; the inscriptions, the monuments of art, have been all destroyed or carried away, and even the traces of its former glory are eclipsed.

The origin of Fiesole is involved in the inextricable mazes of ancient fable; but its walls display, notwithstanding so many assaults, a style of building of the most remote antiquity, and seem to prove the prodigious force of the men who constructed them; the walls are not composed of ordinary and evenly wrought stones, but of immense masses of rock, irregularly shaped, and artfully placed one upon another: in short, the solidity of these erections, and the elevated site which they occupy, seem like the work of the elder race of mankind terrified at the tremendous catastrophe of the deluge. Aqueducts, erected probably at the same period, carried to Fiesole the waters of Mount Reggi, several miles distant; and, although they were broken down in the time of Cæsar, as Villani tells us, yet their remains dispersed along the country, resemble real rocks in magnitude, and may be confounded with them from their rude and savage appearance. Fiesole was one of the twelve cities of Etruria; the ancients praised the serenity of its atmosphere, and the salubrity of its waters and baths, which were reported to be a cure for many maladies. This city had the glory of resisting, though unsuccessfully, and of fatiguing the armies of Rome, on which occasion they gave proofs of the greatest courage. We perceive in the writings of Livy and the other Roman authors how formidable the inhabitants of Fiesole and the rest of Etruria were esteemed; all the forces of Rome were employed at various times to subdue them, and several dictators were created for the purpose of allaying the fear which this people inspired. The inhabitants of Fiesole distinguished themselves on several occasions, amongst them, one of the most remarkable was when, on the discovery of Catiline's conspiracy by Cicero, the seditious citizen, compelled to seek safety in flight, escaped from Rome accompanied by his fellow conspirators; they fled to Fiesole, the only city which by its formidable situation, and the courage of its inhabitants, was capable of

resisting the Roman arms. Catiline indeed did not hesitate to hazard an engagement with the consul Caius Antonius, the result of which was a doubtful victory, although the brave citizens of Fiesole were few in number and almost without arms. The fortune of Rome at length triumphed, when the leaders of the Etrurian army, mortally wounded, fell upon the mangled heaps of their soldiers' bodies. The victory was, however, almost as dear to the conquerors as to the conquered, and at Rome smiles struggled with tears when the news of the battle arrived there.

In the year 405, Fiesole, assisted by Florence, opposed the attacks of Radagaisius king of the Goths, and Rome was delivered from the yoke of that people, under the weight of which Italy had so often groaned. It was on this occasion that the Florentines consecrated a temple to St. Reparata, as a contemporary historian relates. Saint Ambrose had promised frequently to visit his beloved Florentines, and, during the time that Radagaisius was besieging Florence, the holy Prelate, who had died a little time previously, appeared in a dream to one of the inhabitants, and promised them deliverance on the morrow. This man communicated to his fellow citizens his vision, which inspired them with great courage. Accordingly Stilicon, the imperial general, made his appearance with his army, and a division arising amongst the Goths, their defeat was rendered still more certain. As this victory took place on the birth-day of the Virgin Martyr, St. Reparata, the Florentines raised a temple in her honour, which was ornamented with the trophies borne from their enemies.

Desirous of enriching this church with some relics of the Virgin Saint whose body was deposited with the monks of Jeano, a little town in the Terra di Lavouro, they applied in 1352 to the king of Naples, who ordered the monks to deliver up an arm of their Patroness. Grieved at a command which obliged them to do so great an outrage to the remains of the martyr, the good monks sent in its stead a piece of wood so exquisitely carved, and so well imitating nature, that the fraud was not discovered until several years afterwards by a jeweller who had been directed to make a rich reliquary to contain the precious and holy limb.

The subjection of Fiesole was the means of Florence receiving amongst her citizens some very noble and distinguished families. It may be sufficient to mention the Pazzi, the Strozzi, the Guadagni, and the Adimari. The destruction of that city also furnished Florence with innumerable columns and other materials for the erection of beautiful edifices; and from the same place she carried away many statues and sculp-



tured marbles to adorn her temples and her palaces. It is very probable that the four columns which support the arched roof of the gallery of the Baptistry, are the remains of some monument in Fiesole, and even at this day, they find in the soil of its environs, very rich materials.

Fiesole was one of the first cities after Rome that embraced Christianity. She has produced a great number of philosophers and literary men besides several celebrated artists both in sculpture and painting. The city of Fiesole may say with pride "here rose my high towers and my impregnable walls—there lay the baths of Catiline—yonder were the temples of Jupiter Fulminans, and of Mars—in that place stood the college of Augurs and the palace of the ancient kings," and even yet the relics of those indestructable walls, the steep rocks, and the precipices which seem to be the vast tomb in which the ancient city is buried, inspire sensations of awe and veneration. On the ruins of the temple of Jupiter there now rises a church where the All-powerful God is worshipped, and the college of Augurs is replaced by an Academy, where they no longer teach the superstitious art of reading the future, but the truth and holiness of the Christian doctrine. The bathing waters, formerly so celebrated, still run amidst the most delightful villas and gardens of Tuscany. These beautiful retreats no longer re-echo the sound of the warlike trumpet, but the sweet accents of joy; and Fiesole has exchanged the splendour of military renown for the more durable glory of peace and the arts.

The most remarkable antiquities of Fiesole are the colossal fragments of the old Etruscan walls, of which a few vestiges only remain, particularly near the monastery of Saint Jerome, which was converted into a villa by the Counts Bardi, and also the aqueduct, the ruins of which may be seen near the convent of La Doecia. The vast subterraneous chambers near the cathedral, and which are called the *Buche delle Fate*, the fairies hiding-places, are worthy of the attention of the traveller.

## LETTER XI.

*Description of the Country about Fiesole—Oratory of John of Bologna—The Convent of La Doccia—Monte Senario—The House of Politiano—The Villa Salviati—The Retreat of the Decameron—Topaja.*

IN the midst of pleasant and select society, solely occupied in games and diversified pleasures incessantly renewed, and which seemed to borrow something of the vivacity of the air which we breathed on these heights, I yet felt a desire of solitude. There we find enjoyment, less expansive perhaps, but more deep, and in which a slight tinge of melancholy is mingled, which is not without its charms.

Thus lonely, and with a book which served me as the text, and so to speak, as the vehicle of my thoughts, I slowly traversed the perfumed hills of Fiesole, under the shade of woods of pine and sycamore. I frequently passed the hours of declining day, in contemplating at a distance the plain of Florence, with its palaces, its high towers, and its domes, coloured by the vivid light of a sun, cloudless and ardent even in its setting. The complete absence of every vapour permitted me to see distant objects with such clearness, that I could trace every detail, and I almost conceived that I must hear the confused murmur of voices and the noise of mechanical occupations amongst the inhabitants of the capital. This prospect was rendered still more interesting by contrasting it with the peaceable shades by which I was sheltered. I placed a just value on the tumultuous pleasure of the town, when I compared them with the silent freshness of the country. This addressed itself eloquently to my heart, and immersed me in that sweet meditation which is the fruit of a tranquil spirit, of a feeling of happiness, and health, and calm joy, or rather of the pleasure one experiences in youth when the passions are slumbering and our being is in perfect harmony with every thing around us.

The day faded, and I heard nothing but the light murmur of the winds of night, as they swept through the foliage mingled with the rippling of a fountain, and the expressive chirping of birds, which, flying here and there, answered one another, and seemed in haste to take advantage of the remains

of day-light, to search for their food and a secure retreat for the night.

I quitted this place with regret, resolving, in gratitude for the sensations which I had there experienced, to visit it again, and to enrich my port-folio with several fine views which I had remarked there.

Guided by the twilight, and shortly afterwards by the beams of the moon, which seemed to rise most majestically amid a crowd of stars, which appeared far more brilliant and numerous than in our climate, I followed a path which I supposed would lead me into the road to Fiesole; when suddenly I distinguished the sounds of rustic music, amongst which I heard the notes of the bagpipe, the guitar, and the *zampogna*. Attracted by the charm of this melody, than which, when well executed by the rustic performers in the depth of a wood, and amid the solitude of night, nothing can be more agreeable, I beheld all at once a light shining through the trees. This led me to the place where the rural concert was, and, guided by its light, I arrived at a fountain, or rather a chapel, for beneath an arch, supported by columns, I saw a painting of the Virgin and the Infant Jesus, surrounded by cherubims and prostrate angels. An abundant stream fell from a sculptured lion's head which frowned under the painting, and flowed into the reservoirs which were placed at the sides of the edifice. A lamp, suspended from the centre of the arch, rendered the scene still more interesting. A whole family were imploring the Divine grace for the recovery of an infant which its mother held in her arms, covering it with tears and kisses; the other members of the family were praying with fervour, or chanting hymns which they accompanied with their instruments.

If the reader can imagine the mingling of voices and music, most simple and harmonious, with the sound of the dancing waters flowing over the stones and along the green turf—the light of the moon through the foliage—the clear lustre of the lamp which gilded the figure of the virgin in the niche, and shone in the reflexion of the crystal and moving waters, shedding at the same time a light over the actors of this pious scene—if he can imagine this scene more impressive as it was unexpected, and so sweetly harmonizing with those serious sensations which filled my heart—he will even then have only a weak idea of the impression which I experienced.

At my approach, the good people rose from their prayers, but I begged that I might mingle my intercessions with theirs. The hymn was recommenced, and the voices of the young girls, joined to those of musicians of every age, made one of the most delicious concerts I ever enjoyed.



The route of these villagers lay along the road to Fiesole. As I accompanied them they related to me a crowd of miracles, which they attributed to the virtues of those waters, and above all, to the intercessions of the Madonna to whom they are consecrated. It is pleasing to behold the gifts of nature associated with the name of their Author.—this is to attribute blessings to their true source, and to awaken those consoling ideas of mercy and protection, which nourish faith and inspire gratitude towards the Deity.

The chapel of this fountain, which I frequently revisited, is one of the finest monuments of the kind. It presents a mixture of antique and modern taste, which to me is very delightful. It was ornamented, according to tradition, by John of Bologna, who possessed a mansion in this neighbourhood. He employed some fine materials, procured from an ancient edifice, and he has arranged them with great taste.

I had promised to visit the convent of La Doccia, and I had an opportunity, while I was employed in sketching in this picturesque spot, of becoming acquainted with its inhabitants, who did not belie the good opinion which I had at first conceived of them.

Pious, without affectation, one might perceive from their manners, from their physiognomy, which was rather amiable than austere, from the neatness and propriety of their garments, from the flowers which shaded the windows of their cells, or which, placed in crystal vases, ornamented their church, in short, from all the details of their domestic management which was excellent and well understood, one might perceive that these monks did not neglect any of those innocent pleasures which their situation allowed. Indeed they appeared perfectly happy; and doubtless they would not have exchanged their pleasant and peaceable life for the grandeur and pomp which the world bestows upon its votaries.

The church, though small, possesses some objects worthy of attention, such as the pictures of the great altar, and of one of the chapels, which are from the pencil of Niccodemo Ferrucci, a pupil of Passignano.

In front of the church runs a terrace, planted with large cypress trees, which form, as it were, the peristyle of the edifice. It is also surrounded with beautiful gardens. The building, upon which these grounds are now supported, formerly served as aqueducts, or perhaps as baths, and the streams which yet wander through them give freshness to a vegetation which is extremely vigorous. The lines which the different stages of these ruins present, form combinations of figures of which the effect is pleasing and picturesque.

At some distance from Fiesole there is another monastery, of a very different character from that which I have just described; it is that of *Monte Senario*.

Isolated in the mountains, and removed from every other habitation, it occupies the centre of a wood of fir-trees, which surround it on all sides and hide it from the view of those who climb the steep side of the mountain. The pilgrims who travel towards this sanctuary would easily lose their way over the heaths and in the underwood were it not that little oratories, which serve as stations and land-marks, had been erected at short distances to point out the way. This place would serve extremely well as the retreat of hermits who have completely renounced the world, and who, relieved from their earthly bonds, seem to have no other aim, by the isolated and skiey spot which they have chosen, than to approach that Heaven which they hope one time to enter, through sufferings and privations of every kind, and the renunciation of all the sweets of life.

The monks of La Doccia, on the contrary, seek Heaven by a more practicable way. They do not resemble these austere religionists, but rather those persons, who, disgusted with the noisy pleasures of society, retire into an agreeable solitude to enjoy the innocent delights of a country life. In quitting the world they do not become misanthropists, and they still hold communication with their fellow-men, when they administer to them succour and consolation.

The origin of the convent of Monte Senario was as follows:—Towards the middle of the thirteenth century Brother Giovanni di Vicenza, a monk of the order of Preachers, and at this time an eloquent and celebrated missionary, arrived at Bologna, where he was soon surrounded by a multitude of the inhabitants of the neighbouring towns and villages. He converted and reconciled many; he repressed the luxury of the women, and he produced many other admirable effects by the preaching of the word of God. This same Fra. Giovanni preached a general peace in Italy; and the princes, magistrates, and people, to the amount it is said of four hundred thousand persons, entered into that engagement. Every one was ready to embrace it, but, unfortunately, these good intentions lasted only a few days. The zealous missionary, proud of the ascendancy which he had acquired over his fellow-countrymen, now wished to become their master, and to gain the sovereignty. His triumph did not last long: he was cast into prison with his partizans, and soon afterwards exiled; too late repenting that he had not confined himself within the bounds of his

sacred ministry, and convinced of the instability of all human things.

Nevertheless, the seeds which he had scattered fructified in the timorous minds of his disciples. Many persons, of various conditions in life, adopted the monastic vow; and in 1233 seven noble Florentines retired into the heart of the forest which surrounded Monte Senario, and constructed, in the summit of the mountain, cells, in which they might pass the lives of anchorites. They called themselves the servants of the Virgin Mary; and they soon were followed by others who were zealous in imitating their example. Another Florentine, Filippo Benizi, was a vigorous propagator of this new order. At this day there may be seen within the walls of the convent the seven grottoes of the founders, and also that of Benizi, who was canonized and became the patron of the society.

There are some good paintings in the church. On the roof Gabbiani, the best scholar of Dandini, a painter of the school of Cortona, has represented the Virgin bestowing their habit on the founders of the order. This hermitage is most remarkable as having been the retreat of many men of merit.

A contemplative life, which exalts the imagination and fixes it constantly on one predominant object, or idea, which it continually nourishes and examines, as it were, in every point of view—this concentrated existence, directing its attention towards only one study as its aim and end, gives birth to talent, and carries it to its highest perfection. We might mention the names of a crowd of celebrated people who have been educated in the shade of the cloister, and whose happy dispositions might never have been developed amid the tumult of the world, and in an active life which might only have stunned and distracted them. It is not, therefore, astonishing that the hermitage of Monte Senario, the situation of which adapts it so well for reflexion, and where the distraction of the world is so well avoided, should have produced many literary men and artists. Amongst the latter may be mentioned Mascagni, who in this monastery assumed the name of Arsenio; and J. B. Stephaneschi, who took the cowl in 1605.

My frequent walks in the neighbourhood of Fiesole had not, as was my custom, any determined aim; I wandered at hazard, and this mode of seeing and observing procured me much unexpected pleasure, and many an agreeable surprise; it furnished me with contrasts which might have escaped me in a more methodical route. The numerous villas which I passed particularly attracted my attention, from a double motive of interest—the historical facts which they recalled, and the picturesque situations which they occupied. The environs of



Fiesole indeed, so well known for the beauty of their prospects, have been the retreat of numbers of celebrated men, who, in the tranquillity of that place, have given themselves up to study and reflexion. Amongst these may be mentioned the celebrated Politian, who in one of his letters addressed to Marcilio Ficino has described the situation of his villa at Fiesole, and which reminds us of the modest but commodious habitation of Horace. Thither he frequently retired to correct and complete his writings, and from thence he addressed, in 1478, to Pandolfi Colenuccio, the *Racconti Amatorii* of Plutarch.

This house, which is not far from Fiesole, in a place refreshed by a fountain which flows underneath the thick shade, and which the poet distinguished by the name of *lucens fonticulus*, appears to be the same as the oratory which is called *Fonte lucente*, and which was erected at the end of the seventeenth century in memory of a miraculous crucifix. In this place Ant. Pellori, in 1733 painted his picture of the Resurrection. There also may be seen there a picture on wood, bearing the date of 1398, which was brought from another chapel which has been demolished.

From this spot the traveller beholds the whole course of the Mugnone; an ancient bridge terminates the view on one side; and on the other extremity of the pass where Radagaisius was enclosed and destroyed, with all his men, there is another Roman edifice, which has gained the appellation of Cicero's Tower.

This quadrangular building, which is very lofty, and composed of stone and bricks, resembles a fortification destined to defend the pass of the mountain, rather than the house of an individual. It is a curious fact, that there are iron rings fixed in this tower, at a certain height from the ground, similar to those which, in sea-ports, are used to moor ships and boats to. It is conjectured that this must have been their use: but then the level of the river must have formerly been much higher than at present; or else this valley must have been a lake, the waters of which, breaking a passage through the rocks of Fiesole, have flowed into the low grounds. Indeed, the boundaries within which the Mugnone flows appear almost to have the shape of an oval crater. The borders of the circumference are very clearly marked out, except on the side of Fiesole, where there is a very deep cut, by which the torrent escapes.

It is the opinion of some naturalists, that the neighbouring valley of Mugello was the mouth of a volcano, and that it also contained a lake; and that the plain of Florence, as I have just mentioned, formed another immense lake, which extended to the mountains of Lucca and Pisa.

The Mugnone presented many more variations in its course; for, after passing the bridge at Badia, and turning round the hills of Fiesole at *Cure*, the villa *Bilotti*, and the monastery of St. Benedict, it flowed through the *Via Ceia*, as far as the *Via Frusa*, perhaps so called from the rapid current of the waters as they passed; then, still seeking the lower grounds, it turned towards the city, passing by *Pinti*, by *Caffeggio*, and by the street called *San Gallo*; till, falling by the street *de Gori*, it arrived at the point of its junction with the Arno, a little beneath the bridge *della Carraja*. Tradition strengthens this idea, and the ancient maps of Florence confirm it; and, moreover, the sand and gravel which in our days have been dug up in these various spots, amount to a demonstration. But let us return to the villas which adorn its borders.

Dino Dazzi, a Florentine poet, possessed a house in the neighbourhood of San Dominico, as well as Ugolino Verini. Scipio Ammirato the Elder dates the dedication of his Commentaries on the wars of Don Juan of Austria, with the Turks, from his little villa of Fiesole, the 1st of March, 1581; and the traveller still perceives with pleasure this inscription traced on the stone-work of the architrave:

SCIPIO ADMIRATUS REIP. FLOR. SCRIPTOR.

On the banks of the Mugnone, there is a cluster of houses which has received the name of the *Cure*. Dante retired thither to enjoy the tranquillity of its solitude. When this illustrious poet was driven into exile, his house was confiscated.

It was not far from hence, and in the villa Salviati, which is built upon an eminence, at a place called *La Lastra*, that the faction of the Bianchi, to the number of sixteen hundred gentlemen, and nine thousand foot soldiers, assembled in 1304, during the night of the 19th of July. From thence they marched upon Florence, and even penetrated into the city. But, seized with a panic terror, they fled precipitately out of the gates, and, dispersing, abandoned their enterprise. It has been thought that Dante was a party to this rash enterprise, in the hope of returning to his country; and, indeed, it was not long after this event, that he abandoned Tuscany and retired to Padua.

Petracco, the father of Petrarch, and the friend of Dante, was also connected with the party of the Bianchi. Exiled from Florence at the same time, and by the same sentence, they participated in the dangers of this nocturnal attempt. Returning immediately to Arezzo, whither he had retreated with his wife, Eletta Caccigiani, Petracco found, that on this night, which had been attended with so much peril to himself, his wife had presented him with a son, whose birth had endangered his mother's life. This son was the celebrated Petrarch,

The Villa Salviati gives a good idea of those strong castles which, in the fourteenth century, formed the retreat of the revolting nobles, whose followers tyrannized over the neighbouring country. One of these castles, called Monte Acinico, which was built by some cardinal in the Mugello, and in which he received the honour of a visit from the pontiff Gregory X., became so formidable a station, that the Florentines were compelled in 1306 to besiege and raze it.

A very melancholy circumstance, which happened in 1349—the assassination of Christiano and Mainardo, two of the intimate friends of Petrarch, by the exiles of Florence, gave occasion to that illustrious poet to write to the governor of Florence a very vehement letter, which seemed to carry all the indignation of its author into the breasts of the Florentine magistrates. They sent troops into the Mugello, and, in consequence, many of their strong-holds were destroyed; and, as a modern historian of Italian literature has observed, Tuscany owed her tranquillity to the eloquent appeal of one of her banished citizens, and one to whom the goods of his family had not yet been restored.

By degrees the sombre and formidable appearance of these fortresses has vanished. Porticoes, inclosed with light iron gates, have succeeded to the draw-bridges; and the walls of the terraces are covered with vases of marble or bronze, which contain the rarest plants, while the details of ancient architecture have been converted into more elegant or convenient forms. Frequently, as is the case with the Villa Salviati, the ancient mansion only serves as a habitation for the steward and the *famiglia*, or domestics, and porticoes or passages paved with Mosaic or small stones, unite the ancient building to a new edifice, constructed in a more elegant style, and in a more accessible situation, embellished with all the brilliant additions which fashion, however variable, renders necessary; and which were unknown to the austere and gothic feudatories who formerly possessed such domains.

On the banks of the Mugnone also is situated the majestic villa which is called *Tre Vici*, and which appears to have been the retreat of the company for whose entertainment Boccaccio composed his Decameron during the plague of 1348.

Indeed Boccaccio himself, without pointing out the place otherwise than by the word *il contado*, says in his work "On Wednesday, at break of day, the ladies and their cavaliers, leaving Florence with their suites, commenced their route, and after proceeding two miles, arrived at the place which had been prepared for their reception, and which was sufficiently remote from the highway. It was a palace with a spacious



and handsome court, surrounded by *logge*, and by halls and other well arranged apartments furnished with pictures. This edifice occupied the summit of a hill, which was covered with a variety of shrubs and trees of the finest foliage, and surrounded by meadows and beautiful gardens abounding with springs of the freshest water.

At the commencement of the third day, Boccaccio speaks of the cellars of this palace; and he mentions the limpid waters which oozed through every part, and more especially a very abundant fountain that flowed through the meadow, and, falling to the lower grounds, turned two mills.

In another part, he says, that from this spot there is a view of Fiesole; in short every circumstance confirms the idea that this is the villa in question. It is two miles from Florence, and near it there rises a spring, the water of which turns two mills. The idea is also confirmed, from the traditionary evidence of the residents in the neighbourhood.

Near the royal mansions of Castello and La Petraja, there is a *villetta* called Topaja, which is supposed to have been built by Cosmo I., whose arms are placed on the left angle of the house, with this motto, "*Exaltabo te, Domine, et exultabo!*" In thy exaltation will I exult, O Lord!

This Prince, who was much attached to the celebrated historian Benedetto Varchi, and who had already loaded him with benefits, wishing in 1558 to give him a new proof of his affection, presented him with this house, to enable him with greater facility to complete the history of Florence, which he had commenced. The author accepted the favour with gratitude, and retired to this spot, where he passed nearly the whole year, with the exception of some short intervals, during which he visited Pisa, where he commonly resided with the Grand Duke, and read him his history. With these interviews Cosmo was much delighted and only interrupted the author occasionally with a cry of admiration, "*Miracoli, Varchi, Miracoli!*" Varchi took advantage of one of these moments of satisfaction to ask permission to change the vulgar name of Topaja, which was very displeasing to him, for that of *Cosmiano*, but the Grand Duke insisted on his adopting the appellation of *Varchiano*. The polite struggle which ensued prevented any innovation—the ancient name prevailed—and the house still bears it, being always called Topaja (a nest of rats).

Besides his history, Varchi in this place wrote several other works, and particularly his *Ercolano*, one of his most agreeable productions. At the head of this work he gives a description of his house. He speaks of the walk in the green field before his door; of his herb-garden, in which he seems to

have taken much delight; and of dining tête-à-tête in the little terrace, whence, amid a thousand other beautiful objects, Fiesole and Florence were discovered.

He did not live a solitary life here. His friends visited him daily, and sometimes remained whole weeks with him. At last he became so habituated to their company, that he could not live without society. Indeed there was not one man of letters, or of any consideration, who did not visit him, so agreeable was he, and so much honoured and esteemed. The year of the death of this celebrated historian is not well known, as many authors disagree as to the fact; his epitaph at Florence however bears the date of 1571.

La Topaja having been restored to its former owners, the Grand Duke Cosmo III. ornamented it with a great number of pictures of rare foreign fruits, and the most singular productions of the earth, with descriptions of them written underneath. This collection, which was made by a prince who was an amateur in these sort of things, was afterwards divided between the Villa Real di Castello and other places.

The villas of Castello and Petraja, of which a description will be given, are very celebrated for the excellence of their wines. The plants are procured from Spain, from the Canaries, from France, and from the most celebrated Islands of the Archipelago. Redi found in this excellent Muscatel an inspiration which burst out in a dithyrambic, where he sings—

*Ma lodato  
Celebrato  
Coronato  
Sia l'eroe, che nella vigna  
Di Petraja e di Castello  
Pianto primo il muscadello.*

Come, let us raise  
A song in his praise  
And crown him with bays;  
For he is an hero, an excellent fellow,  
Whose hand in the vineyard that glows at Castello  
First planted the stock of the true muscadello.

But of all the delicious places which the voluptuous Romans of the Augustan age did not disdain, none is more celebrated and less frequented than the palace of Pratolino, a beautiful spot buried in the heart of a wood, and which I only discovered by chance. Friendship detained me here some time, and I quitted it at last with that pleasing regret which forms in our after-life such an agreeable theme of recollection

## LETTER XII.

*Gathering Cherries—Visit to Pratolino—Story of Francesco de Medici, and Bianca Capello.*

SETTING out alone, to enjoy the pleasures of the chase, the eager pursuit of my prey had gradually drawn me to a considerable distance from Fiesole, and I completely lost my way in the intricacies of the mountains. The day was wearing away, and the heat became overpowering. Uncertain as to what path I should pursue, I looked in vain for a human countenance to succour me in my wanderings, and at last, sinking with fatigue, half-famished and overwhelmed, I directed my steps to a wood, where I calculated at least on finding a shelter from the sun. It was an orchard of cherry-trees, and to increase my happiness, I perceived a peasant who had climbed into one of the trees, and was gathering the fruit, which he threw into a large basket, supported on the head of a young girl of ten or twelve years of age.

This group appeared to me very beautiful, but just at this time the cherries possessed the greatest attraction for me; upon my offering to buy some of the fruit the owner answered me quickly, that he did not sell them retail, but in baskets full. "Cannot you, at least," said I, "permit me to select a few for my refreshment?" at the same time shewing him a piece of silver. "Hold your hat," he answered, "and you shall have the best." He filled it in spite of me, although I told him I had more than enough, and that the rest would be all wasted. "I must give you the worth of your silver," said he, still showering them down. The conscience of this man was inexorable, and the fruit being very abundant and cheap, I should have been overloaded if I had allowed him.

After making a delicious repast, for the young girl offered me a piece of a thin light cake which she had kneaded herself, I began to think of returning to Fiesole, and inquired the way of my friend. "You are far enough off," said the villager, "and you had better go to Pratolino, which is in the neighbourhood; the agent will show you all sorts of hospitality in the name of our dear Archduke." Delighted with the accident which had conducted me to a place I had so great a desire to visit, I followed his advice, and my conductor



continued to talk in the florid language of Tuscany. "Do you see that mountain shaded by the great chesnut trees, and in the midst of that green spot, the burning windows of that old edifice? Go along this side, leave the house on your left, and you will see a pathway where the fountain throws up its sparkling waters, and rolls away along the green-sward; then follow the windings of the stream, and it will serve you as a guide through the leafy darkness; when you come to the meadow you may take your time, for you will soon reach the gardens of Pratolino; you will have no longer need to follow the banks of the stream, for you will see on a hill-side the house of the agent. A pleasant walk to you," said he, "good bye—may the woods afford you a pleasant shelter—may the winds refresh you, and the benediction of a poor man procure you peaceful slumbers." The young girl seconded the good wishes of her father by a gentle sigh, and a graceful courtesy.

I gaily resumed my way, well refreshed and well directed, yet not without frequently turning my head to look back at the beautiful Italian, who called out, "Don't lose sight of the ruins, the fountain by the side, and the stream that murmurs over the turf." These sweet words, repeated by the echo, died in murmurs on my ear, till I could no longer perceive the fair villager or her father, whom the foliage of the wood hid from my view, nor even the clump of cherry-trees to which I owed so much.

At the entrance of the wood I met a man who offered to conduct me to the factory, whither he was going himself; the kindness and politeness of the inhabitants of these regions assured me of a pleasant reception at Pratolino. I met with marvel after marvel; for, after pursuing a very uneven path, through which my conductor guided me, forewarning me against making false steps over the more unequal parts, I was absolutely overwhelmed with astonishment, when on arriving at my destination I found that the guide to whom I had entrusted myself, was blind! He was, indeed, a man of great intelligence; the acuteness of some of his faculties had been carried to such perfection, that he manufactured a number of very delicate mechanical instruments, and, in fact, became clock-maker to all the neighbourhood.

The little adventures of the day gained me a very gracious reception from the agent and his agreeable family; they compelled me to partake of the supper to which they were just sitting down, and we deferred till to-morrow exploring the retreat of Bianca Capello, the enchanting habitation of a new Armida.

Erected in the sixteenth century under the directions of one of the Medici, the *Villa real di Pratolino* united all the grandeur, beauty, riches, and ingenuity, which that remarkable age could furnish; and although now only the shade of what it was, it still preserves so many charms, and recalls such memories, that a description of it cannot but possess considerable interest.

In 1569, Francesco, the son of Cosmo de Medici, wishing to possess an agreeable retreat in the country bought a vast tract of land, situated six miles from Florence, on the shelving side of Monte Morello; it was a savage, rough spot, covered with wood, and irrigated with numerous streams; the air was fresh and healthy, and although this valley was but a few miles from the capital of Tuscany it was uninhabited. It appeared consecrated to mystery and silence, yet it was destined to become the secret asylum of beauty, of that Bianca Capello, whose singular history presents a striking example of the vicissitudes of fortune, and of the terrible changes which wait on the votaries of love and ambition.

Francesco de Medici, like the generality of Princes, had married from motives of policy; his wife was a Princess of the House of Austria, more virtuous than amiable, and better fitted to inspire respect than love. The young Prince only beheld in this union a golden chain, the weight of which he attempted to alleviate, by giving himself up to his taste for the fine arts, but from which he was too well disposed to dis-embarrass himself.

In the mean while, Bianca, the daughter of Bartolomeo Capello, a noble Venetian, arrived at Florence, already known by her beauty, her weakness, and her misfortunes; she had fled from her own country, and now sought protection from the Prince of Tuscany. A young man of no fortune, but accomplished and beautiful as herself, had carried her off from the bosom of her family: the Capellos denounced him to the Council of Ten, and he was condemned to die. This fair and unfortunate pair found an asylum in the Court of Florence, where the adventures of the beautiful Venetian awakened the curiosity and compassion of Prince Francesco: the latter feeling was nearly allied to love, and the husband of Bianca having been assassinated by his enemies, the passion of the Prince became unbounded; it would indeed have been difficult to break the charm, for Bianca, to her natural attraction, joined artifices which could not fail to ensure her a triumph; in turn she played off all the vivacity of her wit, her attractions, her graces, and even her caprices, to amuse the melancholy humour of her lover: in this manner she became necessary

to him, making him forget his domestic grievances, and neglect his affairs—love had tied the knot, habit confirmed it, and each day drew it still closer.

To enjoy less disturbance Francesco had resolved to retire with his mistress to the solitude of Pratolino. He entrusted to an ingenious artist, of the name of Buontalenti, the duty of embellishing the scene of his retirement. A magnificent palace and superb gardens appeared, changing this savage spot into the most enchanting residence. Here was assembled a brilliant court of which Bianca became the sovereign. The Grand Duke's love knew no bounds; every thing was lavished on the object of his attachment. She was the aim of all pleasures, the idol of all homage. The great nobility of the state, the ministers, the courtiers, were all of them at her feet, and she alone dispensed places and favours, while the Grand Duchess could scarcely obtain those common marks of respect which were due to her rank. The chagrin which she experienced from the constantly increasing triumphs of her rival, and the weakness of her health, were too much for her to resist, and she died in giving birth to a dead child. The Grand Duke shed many sincere tears; he reproached himself as the cause of this calamitous accident, and he fled at last from his palace suffering all the agonies of remorse. He wandered about for some time in the most solitary places of Tuscany, avoiding sedulously the presence of his seducer. He was weak, however, and his resolutions were soon forgotten; retirement, public opinion, nothing could withhold him, and he again delivered himself up to the undisturbed indulgence of his passion.

Bianca, during the life of her husband, had made the Grand Duke swear on a consecrated image that she should be his princess, should they both become free. Weak promise! Yet the madness which had dictated it still continued. The daughter of the Capellos usurped the place of Jane of Austria. The marriage, which was solemnized secretly, was not made public until after the appointed time of mourning had expired. The new sovereign princess was then adopted by the republic of Venice, and declared a true and peculiar daughter of St. Mark; and as she did not appear to be inferior to two other daughters of the saint, one of whom had been married to the king of Hungary, and the other to the king of Cyprus, the republic decreed to her the royal crown. This ceremony, at which a deputation of Venetian senators assisted, was one of the most brilliant which had ever been seen. Balls, carousals, tournaments, *vellegiature*, or rural parties, bull-fights, and encounters of wild beasts followed one another without cessation.



The Grand Duke, fatigued with the affairs of government retired again to Pratolino, where he was reposing in the bosom of pleasure, when his son died, the only fruit of his former marriage, and the heir of the family of Medici. He might perhaps have found consolation beneath this infliction, had he had any expectation of a family by Bianca, but of this he now despaired, and, not having adopted the son which she had borne him before their marriage, he fell into a state of melancholy.

Inclosed in his retreat, far from the palace, which only recalled the memory of his son, and from the city, the inhabitants of which he had alienated from his authority, invisible to his people, and rarely seeing even his minister, he had no other consolation than the company of the Grand Duchess. Solitude, luxury, and the want of occupation, inflamed his passions and placed him completely in the power of this woman, to whom all the calamities which Tuscany at this period suffered were attributed. Hatred, however, was changed into pity, when the calamity was known which terminated at once her existence and that of her husband.

The circumstances of this affair do not appear to have occurred in the common course of things: the causes and the details of it are alike unknown, and they have been differently explained. Those who love the marvellous have collected a thousand fables more or less absurd on the subject; others have alleged poison as the instrument; but the problem still remains to be solved.

Whatever the real facts may have been, it is known that the Cardinal de Medici had always been the enemy of Bianca Capello, and that he never pardoned his brother for forming this degrading alliance. Some pretend to say that the Grand Duchess, who had resolved to avenge herself, seized the opportunity of the Cardinal's visiting her in the absence of her husband. She prepared for her brother-in-law some pastry, which she knew was very agreeable to his palate; in this a subtle poison had been mingled: the Grand Duke, returning from the chase, and hungry from exercise, unluckily found this poisoned meat and ate a large quantity of it. Bianca hearing the intelligence, and desperate at the idea of having poisoned her husband, resolved to share his fate, and the poison in both instances taking effect at the same moment, they both expired in inexpressible tortures, without the Cardinal permitting any one, as it is said, to afford them succour, which circumstance has made him pass as the author of this calamity.

One of the historians of the Medici, Galuzzi, has endeavoured to prove the incorrectness of this account. He confesses,

however, that the Cardinal de Medici, who under the name of Ferdinand succeeded his brother, persecuted Bianca even after her life had expiated her crime, and sought even to extinguish the remembrance of her. In fact, he ordered the body of this unfortunate creature to be conveyed to the common cemetery, where she was confounded with all the ignoble dead; and soon afterwards he ordered the arms of the Capellos to be obliterated from all the public edifices where they had been quartered with those of the Medici, and he substituted in their place the bearings of Jane of Austria.

Don Antonio, whom Francesco had recognised as his natural son, had resolved, if possible, to establish a right to the crown; but the Cardinal Ferdinand gave him to understand that unless he contented himself with his station and quality of prince, he would declare him to be the son of a locksmith, who, as he asserted, was his real father. Don Antonio, who had much good sense, acceded to the determination of the Grand Duke, and was made a Knight of Malta, Grand Prior of Pisa, and Lord of Capestrano. He lived in the royal edifice in the gardens of the Medici, where Lorenzo the Magnificent had established his school of Arts. This prince, in imitation of Francesco, devoted himself to the studies of the occult sciences. He also established a printing-press at that place.

The morals of Francesco had a great influence over those of the age. His weakness towards Bianca was productive of great evils. Every body and every thing in the state had been rendered subservient to the caprices of this woman. She made offices venal, justice arbitrary, and ministers servile, and the prince himself became a passive instrument in her hands which she wielded at will. The court of Florence, the richest and most polished one in Europe, was a model to the princes who sought to imitate the Grand Duke in his taste for magnificence and pleasure. Gallantry became a fashion which spread abroad the most scandalous consequences, divisions in families, and private animosities. But of all its evil effects the most deadly was that relaxation of morals which is even now tolerated, which gained ground and influence insensibly, and which has served succeeding ages as a model and an excuse.

On the other hand, the taste of this prince for the arts, and the encouragement which he lavished on artists, instead of giving genius an impelling motion, seemed only to extinguish or to enervate it. It almost makes one think that the arts are the children of Luxury, who, like Saturn, ends by devouring his offspring.

The reign of Francesco de Medici, though favourable to the fortunes of artists, prevented them from making any

nearer approaches towards perfection. This honorable career became the path of ambition, and the productions of art became the furniture of the auctioneer's sale-room. Taste indeed was becoming more general. Festivals and spectacles became, as it were, essential to the happiness of every rank. The liveliest emulation reigned in every class of society, and on all sides arose the most gorgeous monuments. This species of luxury was in the highest vogue amongst the rich and powerful princes of Italy. Francesco, however, piqued himself on surpassing all the others. He boasted particularly of his architectural talents, and he used to display to his inquisitive guests the palace of Pratolino as the work of his own invention.

But the glory of the Medicean age was about to set for ever. The splendid light which had illuminated Europe began now to fade in the dearth of aliment. The dispersion of the school of Raffaele, and above all, the death of Michael Angelo, had left a void which it was impossible to supply. Nevertheless the arts still flourished in appearance; there was no want of ready and amiable talent; luxury, gallantry, pleasure, still inspired the hand of the artist—the master-age was past.

## LETTER XIII.

### *Description of the Palace and Gardens of Pratolino.*

AMONGST the numerous and magnificent palaces of the sovereigns of Tuscany, that of Pratolino is acknowledged to be most worthy of the traveller's attention. The hand of nature had prepared the elements, that of the artist had only to reduce them to shape and symmetry. The forests which covered the ground, needed only the axe in certain parts, or to be formed in others into avenues. The thick tufts of trees, when pierced by winding path-ways, were transformed into retired asylums and inextricable labyrinths. On all sides fountains sparkled up which did not demand the human hand to guide them. Their waters were either collected in vast basins, or flowed through channels open to the air, or forcing their way through canals from which they sprung in jets, they then fell in cascades, carrying along into every part their freshness and the gentle murmur of their motion.

These woods composed of firs, laurels, and other ever-green trees, seemed the asylum of perpetual spring. To provide for the pleasures of the chace and angling, the park was stocked



with wild animals, and the waters were filled with fish of every species. The gardens were under the management of experienced gardeners, who transplanted thither the rarest trees and flowers, and brought to perfection the fruits of all nations. In short this retreat called to mind the delicious abodes which the voluptuous emperors of Rome retired to, in pursuance of the counsels of Epicurus, to lay down the purple and to crown themselves with the roses of pleasure.

The presiding idea of him who constructed the palace, seems to have been to form an abode of mystery. In fact, travellers pass by the route of Bologna, only a short distance from Pratolino, without the least suspicion that the forest which they behold, contains a royal mansion—not a single avenue announces it. A single, narrow, unequal way leads to a square in the centre of the park where the house is situated, in such a manner as not to be seen until you arrive before it. This vast court is surrounded by a railing supported and united by pilasters of the rustic Tuscan order. On the left side, in front of the palace, and beyond the trellis-work, there is a large tract of ground covered with trees, at the extremity of which, the colossal statue of the Apennines rises in majesty.

There is an air of grandeur in the general disposal of the palace and the objects which surround it, but the plan of the building, and its exterior decorations, are not conformable. The architecture has been praised on account of the numerous apartments being lighted without the aid of interior courts: In the building is contained a handsome theatre. Several organs, distributed in different apartments, and played by means of water, produce the effect of a great number of different instruments, and give the hearer a good idea of the style of music of the sixteenth century. We shall give a more detailed account of the grottos, which have frequently served as models for things of this kind.

A person must have resided in Italy, or in some other torrid climate, to be able to appreciate the delight which the shade, the murmurs, and the flowing of waters can procure. There the rich find the means of cheating nature, and provide retreats into which they may retire from the fervors of summer. The aphorism of Rousseau, which at first appears like a paradox, is founded in the strictest truth, that cold is best preserved in hot countries. There the houses are constructed on a plan adapted to the climate. The walls are very thick, the windows few and narrow. Every advantage is taken of a current of air when it can be procured; living waters distribute in each apartment a reviving freshness by their moist evaporations, and as a last combination of all that is cool,

they imitate nature in the formation of artificial grottos, which abound with all the advantages which such places afford. —They cover them with stalactites, shells, and marine productions; and they thither lead numerous springs, which murmur or leap through those subterraneous abodes. But, in spite of all they can do, they only obtain at last, with great cost, a feeble imitation of the marvels which Nature has produced without effort.

The grottos of Pratolino are situated in that part which is exposed to the south. They occupy the level ground beneath the terrace which surrounds the castle, and serves it as a base. You descend by a double staircase, in the form of a horse-shoe, to an esplanade in front of the grottos, which forms a second terrace lower than the first. On the side of the gardens it is cut off precipitately, on account of the declivity of the ground, but the lateral extremities are on a level with the grass plot.

The distribution of the grottos, although they are unequal in size and grandeur, is remarkable for the advantages which have been taken of the situation in which they have been constructed. They are all of them vaulted, and rest on beautiful columns of marble. One certainly cannot too much admire the brilliancy of the interior decoration, which is nearly the same through them all. The walls and the vaulted roofs are ornamented with stalactites, madrepores, marine plants, corals, shells, and mother-of-pearl; and all those objects are mingled with paintings in Mosaic. Everywhere one sees statues of marble or of bronze, which cast streams of water into basins of marble or of gilded lead. These waters, by secret passages, flow beneath the pavement, and escape into the gardens, where they are again applied to a thousand different purposes.

Amongst the statues, many are to be attributed to celebrated artists, and are no less remarkable for their composition than their execution. The most beautiful have been transported to Florence; yet, notwithstanding, there are several left worthy of observation.

The Grotto of the Deluge is the first the stranger arrives at: it is so called from the quantity of water which flows in it, not only from the ceiling, but from the walls, and even from the pavement. When you enter it, you are completely in the power of the fountain players, who can inundate you without the possibility of your avoiding it, for the fountains bar the passage, and even reach you on the esplanade; the pavement of which, constructed like that of the grotto—of small round stones of various colours, and arranged in compartments, so as imitate Mosaic work, is pierced by innumerable holes, through which a multitude of little spouts of water issue.

It may be added, that we may not have again to return to this subject, that every sort of surprise, and all arts of deceit, are used to entrap the curious.—Sometimes the commodious seats which invite them to repose themselves break with their weight, and duck them in an unexpected bath:—sometimes a ladder is placed as if it led to some curious object, but scarcely have you placed your foot on the first step, when a catch goes off, and unmasks a fountain, which rushes direct into your face:—sometimes, when you are least expecting it, a marine monster, or some other strange figure, rises,—rolls its eyes on you, opens its mouth, and covers you with a flood of water.

In a colder climate this sort of amusement would prove somewhat inconvenient. It is, however, foreseen; no one is exposed to it against his will, and you may avoid it by proper precautions.

The Grotto of the Samaritan is one of the most curious, from the numerous mechanical inventions of Buontalenti, which force the water into action. There is a sort of theatre, in which several complicated movements successively take place. The cave represents a hamlet composed of huts intermingled with trees.—The door of a house opens, and a beautiful village girl comes out, carrying a vase, and approaches one of the fountains to draw water.—Her movements are very natural, and her body possesses a kind of suppleness and grace. She arrives at the fountain, fills her vase with water, places it again on her head, and returns towards the cottage; not, however, without frequently turning round her head to gaze at a shepherd seated near, who seems to admire her, and who attempts to prevail on her to stay and listen to his music. On the sides of the theatre, a blacksmith opens his shop, and is seen busily employed with his workmen in the labours of the forge:—a miller, also, carries sacks of grain to a mill, the mechanism of which is most complete.—In the distance is heard the sound of horns and the barking of dogs, and we are entertained with the representation of a hunt: many wild animals run across the bottom of the stage, pursued by a pack of hounds and hunters.—In the foreground, birds, perched in the branches, pour forth their song; and swans and ducks are seen sporting in the waters.

A theatre placed opposite to the former represents the attack and taking of a fortress. There are also several other mechanical inventions, all very ingenious, and astonishing, when we consider the period at which they were executed.

The grotto *della Stufa*, or of the Bath, is small, but ornamented very carefully with madrepores and corals, from which



an exceedingly fine rain escapes, or rather a tepid mist, which sinks into the basin of the bath. This basin occupies the centre of the grotto: it is of red marble, and is supplied at will with cold or warm water, from two satyrs of bronze. From the grottos you descend into the gardens by two magnificent flights of steps.

In the construction of these grottos it seems as if all the resources of the most inventive art had been exhausted to obviate the attacks of heat; though one would almost think it impossible to preserve the humidity and freshness of this artificial atmosphere. Nevertheless, they have here contrived, under the influence of a fiery sky, to create a new temperature, of the most equal mildness; comparable indeed with that of the gardens of Armida, the delusions of which were probably intended to be here realized; unless, as we have already insinuated, Tasso himself has copied the gardens of Pratolino.

On leaving the grotto which we have just described, you enter a magnificent avenue of fir trees and tufted laurels, which, extending along an insensible declivity for about nine hundred feet, is mingled at its extremity with the masses of wood which cover the neighbouring mountains.

The grotto of Cupid, the fountain of Esculapius, the urns, the tombs, and the statues, which people these woods with recollections, attest the respect of the Medici for the precious monuments of art and antiquity—here rises Mount Parnassus, with the statues of Apollo and the Muses; Pegasus is bounding from the summit of the mountain, whence also a limpid stream starts, the sound of which is mingled with the notes of a musical instrument, which is played by water—there rise fountains, ornamented with groups of statues, representing fabulous personages, or scenes from common life.

That temple of such architectural elegance is consecrated to love and the graces! This rude grotto, covered with moss, forms a shelter from the storm—to such a cave Dido and Æneas retreated. A ray of light piercing the rocky ceiling, enables us to distinguish the verses of Virgil carved on the marble.

In the midst of a retired spot, a stream flows through the scented shrubs, giving increase to the waters of several little lakes, which are completely surrounded with large forest trees; a light skiff conveys you to an islet covered with the thickest foliage, where a seat of turf covered with daisies is the only ornament of the thicket—retired from the gaze of the world, shut out from every interruption, here you can meditate at leisure, invited to contemplation rather than disturbed by the murmur of the leaves, and of the waters. From out

the myrtles and the rose bushes rises a column, on which are engraved some verses consecrating the stillness of this retreat to the divinity of mystery.

Such are the gardens of Pratolino, such is the vast enclosure fenced in by a curtain of impenetrable forests, where Francesco de Medici forgot fame and honour in the lap of pleasure. The seductive Bianca Capello was the queen of these solitudes; frequently armed with the symbols of Diana, and surrounded like her with her nymphs, she traversed the woods to the sounds of horns and warlike music; more frequently, however, in the diviner habit of the queen of love, she wandered through these paths with her lover, consecrating the places which witnessed their delights, with monuments, alas! more durable than their happiness.

Having now given some account of the palace and gardens of Pratolino, I shall proceed to say something of that extraordinary work the Colossus of the Apennines. In front of the castle I have said there lies an open space of ground about 300 feet in length, and 100 in breadth; this piece of ground is bordered on each side by lofty fir trees and beeches, the trunks of which are hidden by tufts of laurels, in which are placed niches for statues; the middle of it is covered with turf, and farther on a piece of water extends itself in the shape of a half-circle, behind which rises the colossal statue of the Apennines.

Rising from an elevated and apparently irregular base, to which you arrive by two flights of steps which follow the semicircular bend of the basin, this statue at first appears to be a pyramidal rock, on which the hand of man has rudely attempted to execute the project which the statuary intended to work on Mount Athos, and which Alexander had the proud wisdom to reject; but on a second view we recognize the genius of a pupil, and worthy rival of the great Michael Angelo.

John of Bologna, inspired by the writings of the ancients, executed in this work, the idea which they formed, and have transmitted to us of their Jupiter Pluvialis, a name much more applicable to this figure than that of the Colossus of the Apennines, which has been attributed to it one knows not why. The style is grand, and the character of the head is perfectly suited to the subject; his bushy temples brave the storm, and seem covered with a hoar frost; his hair descends like icicles upon his large shoulders, and the locks of his beard resemble stalactites. In order to add to the extraordinary effect of this Colossus, a sort of crown is placed on his head formed of small *jets d'eau* which fall upon his shoulders,

and rolling over the whole figure make it sparkle in the rays of the sun.

The position is good, setting and bending forward, the God rests one hand on a rock, whilst the other presses the head of a marine monster, which spouts a large volume of water; although by this position much of his height is lost, his head still overtops the trees, and standing off from the blue heavens almost seems to touch the clouds; it would be difficult to imagine a more picturesque and perfect composition in all its proportions; when you gaze on it you perceive no enormous disparity with the objects around, so well does it harmonize with all that surrounds it, and you only conceive an idea of its real magnitude, by comparing it with the groups of passengers, which, when seen at a certain distance, resemble pigmies: if we suppose this giant standing up, it would not be too much to say, that he would be an hundred feet in height.

In the interior of the body there are several apartments, and in the head there is a beautiful chamber, to which the eye-balls serve as windows; the extremities are constructed of a coarse laying of stones; the trunk is formed of bricks covered with mortar or cement, which has acquired the hardness of marble, but which when fresh must have been easily worked, and capable of taking the requisite impressions.

It is said that many of the pupils of John of Bologna who were employed on this work, when they came to execute figures of ordinary dimensions, found that in their giant labours they had lost their exactness of eye and skill of hand.

The untenanted Pratolino is now a melancholy spectacle; the vast apartments, the long galleries, formerly ornamented with pictures or rich hangings, now only display the nakedness of uncovered walls; the mosaic pavements are covered with dust, and the wind sobs through the broken casements. This beautiful place, now almost forgotten, attracts only the traveller, whose affection for the arts prompts him to search for them in the midst of the ruins, which the hand of time and the negligence of man have accumulated.

In the gardens, the walks, formerly so level and covered with the finest gravel, are now broken into gutters, or choaked up sometimes with briars, and sometimes by the enormous branches of some pine which has been struck with lightning; every thing has broken from out the bounds in which they were anciently confined; the walls are crumbling away; and in the midst of the disjointed statues, parasitic plants spring up, and fasten their clasping fingers, covering them with a sombre verdure. The virgin vine climbing



round the columns, mingles its light garlands with the arabesque ornaments which run along the friezes, and which are themselves only an imitation of this natural and rustic decoration.

A few marble statues are still standing, but they are all mutilated, or if any of them are still perfect, they owe their preservation to the thorny shrubs which surround their base. Mosses and lichens however are destroying what even man appears to have been forced to respect. Every where art slowly yielding to nature has nothing to oppose to her but her own massiness and *vis inertiae*.

## LETTER XIV.

*Campo-Santo—Description of the Pictures—Convents of the Apennines—The Hermit—Conclusion.*

THE distance between Florence and Pisa is traversed with such facility and pleasure, that it is more like taking a walk than a journey. There is no country which abounds with more beautiful prospects, or where cultivation is better understood, or which is inhabited by a race whose exterior announces more ease, sweetness, and urbanity. The fields are like gardens, and the rivers resemble canals bordered with picturesque edifices, connected together with garlands of foliage, flowers, and fruits. There is no exaggeration in this picture. The banks of the Arno are planted with fruit trees, round which the vines cling, and their branches intertwining with one another, form garlands of the most picturesque beauty.

I enjoyed with great zest my visit to the celebrated *Campo-Santo*, where the artist can form an exact idea of the revival of painting, since he finds there specimens of the earliest modern painters, not dispersed and confounded with other works, which must necessarily throw them into the shade, but united and following one another in regular progression. By this means he can judge of the *affiliation* of picturesque ideas, and of their successive developement, till he arrives at the works of the great artists of the sixteenth century, who carried painting to the highest pitch of perfection.

The *Campo-Santo* is a most magnificent building ; the inside is coated with black marble, and the outside is covered with

lead : the interior of the building is most rich in architecture, sculpture, and painting. It was intended to be used as a place of sepulture for the principal inhabitants of Pisa, and to perpetuate, by inscriptions and other funeral monuments, the memory of those persons who had distinguished themselves in science or the arts.

The shape of the edifice at first view appears to be a right angle, but it is in fact slightly rhomboidal, that is to say, the corners are not exact right angles. The pavement of the cloister is formed into different compartments of various coloured marbles, and these compartments display monumental stones, on which are engraved the names and the arms of the ancient families of Pisa, to the number of more than six hundred. Under the arcade there are placed some ancient Sarcophagi, supported on brackets ; they amount in number to about six hundred, and they all of them have covers or lids ; most of them are of Parian marble ; they are ornamented with mythological or similar subjects, and, from the inscriptions which yet remain on them, they are of Etruscan or else of Grecian or Roman origin. Notwithstanding this, most of the Sarcophagi contain the ashes of noble Pisans.

Before the erection of the Campo-Santo these tombs were ranged around the walls of the cathedral. Being afterwards, about the year 1297, placed outside of the cloister, where they were exposed to total destruction, they were collected under the arcades by Ferdinand de Medici, who gave a proof of his love for the arts, by causing them to be deposited in the place which they now occupy. Nevertheless, whether it was owing to the ignorance of those who were entrusted to convey them, or whether the dilapidated state, in which some of the sculptures were, made them look upon them as unworthy of their attention, certainly a great quantity, and those too of the most valuable kind, were neglected. They are all of the best age of sculpture, and have served as models to the early Pisan artists, whom we may call the restorers of sculpture.

Independently of these Sarcophagi, there are other antique monuments dispersed here and there on the walls, as well as a variety of modern tombs erected at different periods. We will finish what we have to say of these curiosities before we describe the singular paintings which cover the walls of this immense edifice.

Near a military column, on the ancient Via Emilia, there is an antique bas-relief, which has been long supposed to have been wrought in commemoration of a cage of iron, in which an enormous serpent was enclosed in 1109 by the skill of a man called Nino Orlandi, and carried in triumph through the

streets of Pisa. It is said the marble was sculptured and placed on this spot in memory of this strange achievement, which has been mentioned by many historians. I rather think that there is very little credit due either to the tradition or to the inscription, which was only made in 1777; for one view of the monument plainly shews that the bas-relief bears no traces of a cage or a serpent, while the marble indicates an age still more remote than the fact in question. This marble is in fact only a fragment of an antique sarcophagus.

Amongst the ancient tombs there is one bearing the following inscription :—

*D. M. T. ÆLIUS. AUG. LIB. LUCIFER. FIBUS. (vivid) SIBI. POSUIT.*

In fact, amongst the ancients there are many examples of people who, not having any great confidence in their heirs, have raised their own tombs in their life-time, in order to be sure that their names would reach posterity. The Campo-Santo presents a modern instance of this singular precaution. It is the tomb of Filippo Decio, a lawyer of Milan, and a professor in the university of Pisa. We shall only quote the last words of the inscription, which are curious :—

*—hoc sepulcrum sibi fabricari curavit, ne posteris suis crederet.*

Amongst other modern tombs that of Matteo Corte, a philosopher and physician of Pavia, is curious: it was built in 1544 by order of the Grand Duke Cosmo. The statue reposing on the cenotaph is from nature; the drapery is fine; the head rests upon the right hand, the fingers of which are lost in the curls of his long beard; his left hand holds a closed book. The skilful sculptor seems almost to have given a new and eternal life to his model.

It is well known that Tuscany had the honour of mainly contributing to the revival of the arts in modern times. The Pisans distinguished themselves by the effectual encouragement which at this period they afforded, and the Campo-Santo became the theatre in which, successively, the most celebrated pictures of the fourteenth and fifteenth century were displayed. Here you see passing in review, as it were, Giotto, Simon de Sienna, Buffalmacco, Piero Laurati, the Brothers Orcagna, Spinello d'Arezzo, Taddeo Bartoli, and lastly, Benozzo Gozzoli, who surpassed them all, and who, in concert with his cotemporary Masaccio, gave existence to that new style, which, superseding that of Giotto, spread itself abroad throughout Europe, and more especially in Flanders, and served as a model for the great masters of the following age.



It is very curious to see, in the pictures of Campo-Santo, painting rising through various stages to perfection. As we trace it, we see it casting off its early rude clothing, assuming a form of simplicity, and then of elegance, then attaining beauty and natural graces, till it at last reaches that sublime and ideal beauty, beyond which all is exaggeration—the rock on which art founders when the boundaries of reason are once passed.

The first paintings, which you see on the left, are descriptive of the life of St. Ranieri, the protector of Pisa. There are six in number, and in two lines; the three higher ones are attributed to Simon Memmi di Sienna, and those below to Antonio called Veneziano, from his having painted many pictures at Venice: he was however born at Florence, where he learned the art of painting under Angelo Gaddi. Simon Memmi was the pupil of Giotto, according to Vasari, but according to the conjectures in the *Lettere Senesi*, he appears rather to have been a pupil of Francesco Jacopo di Turrita. He commenced about the year 1300, and painted till 1344. You remark in his pictures more grace and less hardness than in those of his contemporaries. He was particularly celebrated for his skill in portrait-painting; and Pandolfo Malatesta sent for him to Avignon to take the portrait of Petrarch. The poet begged him to trace for him the features of his beloved Laura, and he recompensed him with two sonnets in his praise, which will form a more lasting monument than any of his paintings.

Dante had already immortalized Giotto in those well known verses—

*Cedette Cimabue nella pittura  
Tener lo campo, ed ora Giotto il grido  
Siche la fama di colui oscura.*

Giovanni Villani, the historian, calls him the most celebrated master of his day, and Angelo Politiano commences the sepulchral inscription which was raised by the command of Lorenzo de Medici, with these words:—

*Illa ego sum per quem pictura extincta revixit.*

Giotto has also contributed to the embellishment of the Campo-Santo. The paintings which represent the history of Job added so greatly to his reputation that Benedict XI. sent for him to Rome, and entrusted him with the execution of several pictures, of which only some very slight remains are now to be found.

On the same side are seen some paintings of Spinello Arcetino, which are not very excellent; and as you return on the western side are some of Ghirlandajo, and a few of more mo-

dern date, executed in the places of those which have been destroyed.

We now arrive at the northern part of the cloister, where in the first compartments we see the history of the creation, painted by Buonamico Buffalmacco, a pupil of Andrea Tafi. The first of these pictures occupies the whole height of the cloister, and presents a gigantic figure of the eternal Father, embracing and sustaining the whole celestial system, such as it was conceived to be at this period. Then follow the principal facts in Genesis to the Flood. The pictures of this artist are remarkable for their simplicity, and even grace, and for the justice of movement and expression which they display, though they have a dryness of contour and a stiffness of form, which betray the infancy of art. In representing Noah's Ark he has given the exact forms of various mechanical instruments. The costume of his figures is extremely simple and picturesque, with the exception of the shoes, which are long and pointed beyond measure. His perspective is very bad. The paintings which follow are the work of an artist who was a man of genius, Benozzo Gozzoli, much admired in the fifteenth century, and by the greatest painters of the following age, to whom his works served as models; but who was despised as soon as he was surpassed. All eyes and all hopes were turned to that elevated station where sat Michael Angelo and Raffaele. Nothing else was studied but their works, and no account was taken of those who had pointed out the way. In the pictures of this artist those seeds of talent are discernible which grew to brilliant maturity in the works of Raffaele. Divinity is represented in a becoming manner, while the simple grace and angelic beauty of his virgins and heavenly ministers, the noble and severe character of his patriarchs, and in one word the whole variety of his phisiognomies are all exceedingly appropriate and true to nature. In design he is easy, though not without force. The proportions of his figures are elegant, their postures are noble and graceful, and their movements are just and expressive. His draperies are large, and adjusted with taste. His colouring often possesses vigour and brightness, and his tints are skilfully managed. Gozzoli may be considered the precursor of Raffaele. The pictures of this artist at Campo-Santo are twenty-three in number, occupying in two rows a space of three hundred and twenty-four feet, with the exception of five pictures by other artists. It is scarcely possible to believe, although tradition and historical evidence agree upon the fact, that these pictures commenced in 1434, were completed in the space of two years, a most terrible enterprize, fit, as Vasari says, to frighten a whole legion





Nelle & Son, gra. Grand

CRYPTO-PORTICUS.





of painters, when one takes into account the time absolutely necessary for subsisting the bodily powers only, still more above the capacity of one man, whatever might be his active facility. We can only account for the fact, by supposing that Benozzo was assisted by his pupils.

Many of these pictures are almost entirely destroyed. Some of them have been retouched, and the rapid approaches of the destruction which threatens those in the best state of preservation are visible. They are daily falling in portions from the walls. An ingenious engraver, who has been employed in preserving these specimens of art to after times, has had the chagrin of frequently seeing fragments of figures crumbling before his eyes, which he was just about to copy. It has been remarked with surprise, that under the stucco, which is pretty thick, and on the wall which is exposed by the falling of the mortar, the painters appear to have traced the outline of their composition in a red tint, and that this sketch, very wonderfully, has a perfect correspondence with the contours of the painting executed on the stucco, although the plaister must have completely concealed the first labour!

The pictures of Rondinosi, a Pisan artist, painted about 1666, follow those of Gozzoli. As we gaze on them we involuntarily repeat the verse of Dante:—

*Non favellar di lor ma guarda e passa.*

The chapel at the bottom of the Campo-Santo, which is surmounted by a cupola, was erected by the Archbishop Carlo-Antonio del Pozzo, and was consecrated in 1593.

Over the altar is seen a picture by Aurelio Lomi, painted in 1595, which represents St. Jerome with a pair of spectacles on his nose. This anacronism is common with several painters, ignorant that spectacles were not invented till the twelfth century.

Andrea Orcagna, or Orcagna, was a sculptor, a painter, and a poet, and a great admirer of Dante. His picture of the Last Judgment, though filled with a prodigious number of figures, is yet very simple in the distribution of the various groups, and very clear in the exposition of the subject. Scarcely was this picture finished, when Orcagna was recalled to Florence to execute some work of sculpture. He entrusted to his brother Bernardo the continuation of the subject, perhaps after his own sketches:—the subject was Hell, *alla Dantesca*, or in the manner of Dante.

The prince of Italian poetry made such an impression on the spirit of his cotemporaries by his poem, that the painters knew not how to represent Paradise or Hell, except in the shape which the great poet had given them. Giotto painted,

about 1306, these subjects in the church dell' *Arena* at Padua ; and it is said that Dante, then in that city, used to watch him at work and suggest ideas to him. The same imitations appear to run through all the paintings of this period, both Italian and German. The picture in the Campo-Santo is evidently painted after the Hell of Dante. The painter however has exaggerated the ideas of the poet, and there is no extravagance which he has not permitted himself to use in expressing the torments which the infernal ministers inflict on the damned — *Tutti son pien di spirti maladetti, e di serpenti di diversa mena*. But I have no room for further description.

The travellers who generally visit Italy, and whose principal aim is the examination of the monuments of antiquity, or of those objects of art which adorn the principal cities of this country, have neither leisure nor desire to wander out of the well-beaten track in order to visit places which are not well known, or which they fear would not repay their trouble. Of this number are the convents dispersed amongst the Apennines, which are scarcely known even to the pilgrims, naturalists, and landscape-painters. To the latter the rugged situation of the convent of Vallombrosa presents the finest contrasts with the pleasant scites of the rest of Tuscany.

The mountains of the Apennines, though less lofty than the Alps, are yet covered with snow the greatest part of the year ; and the forests which shade these summits are the asylum of perpetual freshness. One cannot therefore traverse them with pleasure unless during the summer. It was at the end of that season, and in the hope of finding some new food for study, that I undertook this little journey with a skilful French artist. We were furnished with letters of recommendation to the superior of the convent of Vallombrosa, and with the necessary permission to prolong our stay after the usual time allotted to ordinary travellers or pilgrims. We were also particularly acquainted with one of the monks, a zealous friend of the arts and artists.

On leaving Florence we followed the banks of the Arno, pursuing the course of the stream for several leagues. This road, which winds through the fruitful Val d'Arno, is sheltered with poplars and aspin trees, around whose trunks the vines cling, throwing their arms from one tree to another, and tying them together with garlands loaded with fruit. The casinos and farm-houses, built on the side of the mountain, display specimens of elegant architecture, and embellish the country. The Florentines resort to these pleasant retreats to enjoy all the delights of the finest part of the season, to inhale the freshness of the dells revived by a



thousand springs, and to breathe the scented air which pours from the orange and lemon-trees. This part of the country is well peopled, and we met troops of peasants who were bending their steps towards the churches and oratories, which are scattered in great numbers throughout this territory.

The festival days which one sees here almost transport one to Fairy Land. The sumptuary laws of Leopold have only been acted upon in the towns; and to behold the elegance of the villagers one would really think that luxury had fled into the country. Every young girl on her marriage brings as her dowry three complete habits of silk of various colours. Their little petticoats of rose-coloured or azure silk display a beautiful foot and an ankle bound with a knot of ribbands; the sleeves of their corsets are tied up with many little bows of roses, and their hair, separated into tresses, flows under a yellow or black straw bonnet, bordered with ribbands, and ornamented with a bouquet of flowers.

In proportion as we approached nearer to the mountains the casinos and the farm-houses became more thinly scattered. We left the beasts that carried our luggage at a little village which lay at the foot of the rocks, which seemed in a manner to form the base of the chain of Apennines, and which horses could not ascend without great difficulty. By this means we gained a greater power of leisurely observing the picturesque features of these mountains. A steep path-way which followed the windings of the ground led us to the first summit, where we found a forest of chesnut-trees.

It was not until we had surmounted many of the crests of the mountains that we discovered the immense forest of firs, by which the convent is environed, and which forms a dark green curtain in which the summits of this part of the Apennines are hidden. Up to this moment we have experienced, in its full power, the ardour of an Italian sun. Our guide advised us to stop when we reached the chain of woods, whose frigid and dangerous influence we now began to feel. In fact, when you enter these venerable and almost interminable forests, a sudden cold pierces you, and you almost imagine yourself transported to the solitary and humid vallies of Switzerland. The firs seem all equally old, and planted in a regular quincunx shape. The multitude of trunks shuts out all light from around you; the foliage growing thicker as it ascends forms above your head a vaulted roof, impenetrable to the rays of the sun. There are no traces of vegetation on the ground, which is covered with a collection of withered leaves and branches, so deep that the successive accumulation forms a bed

which does not retain even the print of the passenger's foot.

Indeed all things perish under the shadow of the fir trees, which may be classed with those parasitic plants which absorb the juices of the earth, to the destruction of all neighbouring vegetables. This quality, however, causes neither expense to the cultivator of the land, nor injury to the proprietor; since it is the means of destroying many noxious plants, for the sake of that nourishment which supported them. Attached to the soil of its birth, this tree flourishes in the place where its predecessor perished; unlike most trees, which, having absorbed the richness of the earth, leave nothing to their successors but an impoverished soil, incapable of affording them nourishment.

When the monastery first breaks upon the sight, it forms an imposing contrast to the wild and savage forms which surround it, and presents, in the length of its edifices, almost the appearance of a city. A square tower, rising above the other buildings, and furnished with a clock, the sounds of which alone break the solemn stillness of the air, was the only thing which bore signs of the monastery being inhabited; for as yet we had not encountered a single mortal since our entrance into the forest. We were only disturbed by the noise of the wind, which beat against the branches; and I do not believe we saw, amid the depths of these shades, any other living creatures than the troops of squirrels which lived on the fruits of the fir trees. On arriving before the monastery, the grass plots, the immense courts, were all deserted and solitary; and it was not until we had rung for a considerable time at an iron grating, that we were attended to, and at last introduced into the hall which is set apart for the reception of strangers.

The monks were at church; but the Father P——, who waited on us, received us with great attention, and led us to some very pleasant cells, where nothing that could be useful or agreeable to the tired and rejoicing traveller was forgotten.

He wakened us on the following morning, and reminded us that it was proper we should return thanks to Heaven for the happy termination of our journey.—These good monks, of whom very few have ever been absent from their convent for years, consider a walk of eighteen miles a very long journey; and, although they seem totally to have renounced the world, they yet eagerly questioned us respecting what was passing there.

Father P—— did the honours of the convent in a most pleasing manner; he was our *Cicerone*, and our guide in all our picturesque excursions. I cannot describe in detail the various edifices which compose this immense building. The

walls which surround the monastery are sufficiently lofty to protect it from any sudden surprise; but the monks have nothing to dread from the inhabitants of the country, to whom they have proved themselves the kindest benefactors.

We have been shown all their treasures of rich relics and other ancient works; and, amongst other pictures of the fourteenth century, we have discovered two fine heads of *Massaccio*. The cabinet of natural history contains a collection of petrifications of different kinds, amongst which are some fossil bones and teeth of the elephant, found in *Val-d'Arno* and the *Val-di-Nievole*.

In the neighbourhood of the convent there is a hermitage called *Paradisino*, situated, like the nest of an eagle, on the summit of an isolated rock. The objects by which it is surrounded, and, above all, the mountains which environ it, are of so gigantic a character, that the building itself seems only like a small ruin detached from an immense mass. A headlong torrent rushes down the steep sides of the rock, threatening it with destruction.—To reach *Paradisino* you pass over a bridge thrown across the torrent, and at the extremity of which you find a chapel. A large avenue of firs, planted on the steep declivity, shade a paved road, which is passable even by carriages; soon afterwards, however, you arrive at a pathway constructed with much labour and art, which follows the sinuosities of the land, and winds in a spiral shape round the rock. The path is sometimes only separated from the precipice which yawns beneath it by a barrier formed of the interlaced branches of young trees; and, notwithstanding this safeguard, the bellowing of the cascade, and the rapidity and shock of its waters, from which a thin humid vapour rises, astound the ears of the passenger, and fill his heart with a sentiment very like terror.

When you arrive on the terrace of *Paradisino*, you imagine yourself transported to another world, and your charmed eye stretches over the wide prospect.—The opening of the valley serves as a frame for the most picturesque beauties of all kinds. The foreground is filled with hanging rocks, through which dash fierce torrents; some fallen trees offer a temporary obstruction, but the waters soon loose themselves in the deep obscurity of the forests, which stretch to the borders of the valley where the towers of the abbey burst upon the view.

On the other side the aspect of the country is changed.—It is less wild, and, although mountainous throughout, there are more signs of cultivation.—It is traversed by streams bordered with rural edifices and intermingled with wood. Further on, stretches a vast plain, and a rich tract of country, watered by a majestic river, on the banks of which rise the temples, the



palaces, and the towers of Florence; and the landscape is closed with the mountains of Lucca and the sea of Tuscany.

Evening is the time for enjoying this sublime prospect. At the moment when the sun approaches the horizon, the sea seems all on fire; an inflamed vapour marks out the different ranges of mountains; while the deep vallies are already in dimness, adding by their sombre verdure to the effect of the picture.

As soon as we arrived at the gate of Paradisino, we rung the bell; and the hermit, opening the gate of that part of the building which he inhabited, admitted us.—He lighted a fire by which we might dry ourselves, and offered us some of his humble provisions, which hunger, excited by violent exercise, rendered extremely palatable to us.

This man, though now very old, appeared still endowed with prodigious force and energy.—His white bristly hair, his immense beard, his aquiline nose, his fiery eye, sparkling under a thick eye-brow; in short, his whole physiognomy, gave him more the appearance of a satyr than an anchorite.

It was not without trouble that we could prevail on him to suffer his portrait to be taken; at length, however, he consented, and seated in his usual position, with his body a little bent, and his hands crossed on his beads, his countenance assumed that expression of calmness and reflexion which becomes a repentant sinner. The conversation soon afterwards falling on the wars which desolated the north of Italy, the face of the hermit was touched with a character of fierceness, and his features were changed to those of an animated warrior; by degrees his eyes began to sparkle, and almost to strike fire, and we soon recognized under the hermit's cowl, the outlaw at whose name Italy had formerly trembled. "Why," cried he, fiercely, "why have I renounced the world, whilst my country is menaced with invasion? At the voice of Fornacciaio many a brave fellow would rush forward to shake off the yoke." He accompanied these words with some very strong imprecations, then all at once casting himself on his knees, he besought pardon of God for this burst of earthly passion, and lay for a long time prostrate on the ground.

We endeavoured to restore him to calmness, and telling him how his words had excited our curiosity, he consented out of pure humility to relate to us the history of his crimes and of his repentance.

The name of Francesco Fornacciaio is well known throughout all Italy, and more especially in Lombardy, where it is still the terror of the children—the latter country was the theatre of the many bold and open robberies of this man, who was the Captain of a disciplined troop of banditti: he took

possession of a castle, which he converted into his retreat. there, after overrunning the country with his band, he returned to divide the fruits of successful violence.

The situation of the castle, fortified by nature, protected them for a long time from the terrors of justice, and it was at last found necessary to besiege it with cannon and regular troops, to dislodge the robbers, of whom a great number were surprised. Fornacciaio escaped almost alone, but a price was immediately set on his head; he wandered about a long time oppressed with fear and remorse, until at last he voluntarily surrendered himself into the hands of justice, and experiencing the clemency of the Pontiff, in consideration of his repentance he was absolved from his crimes: from this moment he took the resolution of devoting himself to the life of a hermit, and entreated permission to bury himself in the solitudes of the Apennines.

For many years he lived an austere penitent in a damp grotto; at length he was with difficulty prevailed upon to transfer his habitation to the hermitage of Vallombrosa, his perseverance in this course being esteemed a proof of his harmlessness.

One of the most singular circumstances in the life of this man was related to us by the Prior of the convent; Fornacciaio had passed it over in silence and humility.—Being in the neighbourhood of Sinigaglia, the Governor of the Castle, who wished to gratify his private revenge, cast his eyes on this man, as a person whose intrepidity and hardy enterprize rendered him well adapted for his purpose. He sent for him to hear his proposal, on the execution of which he promised him a pardon, and an oblivion of all his crimes, and moreover a safe conduct. Fornacciaio, without hesitation, accepted the safe conduct and waited on his employer; at his approach the gates opened, but they shut on him as he entered; he betrayed no fear, however, but was presented to the Governor, who took him aside, and made him acquainted with the murderous designs, which were to be the price of the pardon. Fornacciaio answered with indignation, “Do you take me for a vile assassin? Know that I have never killed any one, but in fair combat face to face, and I would not though it should save my head, commit in cold blood so cowardly and guilty a deed.” The Governor then threatened to arrest him, but the robber reminding him of his promise of safe conduct, and drawing two pistols from underneath his mantle, swore that if he called for assistance he would take his life, and then sell his own as dearly as possible. The Governor, trembling gave him permission to retire, but Fornacciaio obliged him to unfasten

the doors himself, and to accompany him out of the castle gates.\*

I cannot quit this country without giving some account of an excursion, which we made to the most elevated summit of this part of the Apennines.

We remarked, what a celebrated Tuscan naturalist had already observed in other parts of Italy, that about half way up the mountains the woods of chesnut and fir trees disappear, and nothing is found on the summit but immense beech trees, which with firs are the primitive and indigenous trees of the mountains of Tuscany; one perceives as the ground rises a gradual diminution in the size of the trees: on the sides of the mountains of great magnitude as they approach the summit they become rough and tufted, and bear fruit in great abundance.

From the summit, (which is covered with a very fine herbage, or rather with a thick moss, and extremely slippery,) one of the most elevated of the Apennines, we took a survey of all Tuscany; it was spread like a vast map beneath our eyes, where we could distinguish all the ramifications of the mountains which separated the provinces into vallies; the streams spread over the land like threads of silver; the towns and villages seemed like accumulations of grains of sand, and the city of Florence, notwithstanding all its colossal monuments, seemed only like a single point in this immense plain; in the west the Mediterranean distinctly bordered the horizon; on the opposite side the Adriatic flowed.

I shall not attempt to describe the various scites, which furnished us with numerous subjects for our pictures during the remainner of our stay at Vallombrosa. Every day we made fresh discoveries of this kind, while the varied scenes which this wild country presented, and the peaceable and quiet life which we there led amid solitudes which invited us to study, prevented us from feeling any lassitude.

I have, I doubt not, forgotten a number of objects which well merited description, and this account will convey but a feeble idea of Vallombrosa; it may, however, serve to excite in the minds of artists a desire of visiting this ancient monastery, and they will not repent of their pilgrimage.

THE END.

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\* Some time after our visit, the hermit was found dead at the return of spring. If we may believe public report, this man, although reclaimed from many of his ancient errors, still nourished a vice which the rigour of the cold to which he was sometimes exposed in winter rendered somewhat excusable. The unlimited use of strong liquors is said to have produced a spontaneous combustion, which consumed his body without burning his cloaths. The common people, always fond of the marvellous, attributed this death to the divine vengeance.



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